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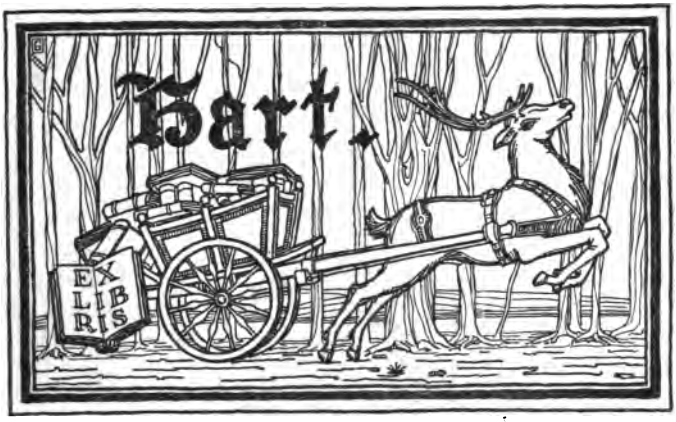

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MISER HOADLEY'S SECRET

A. W. MARCHMONT

NEW YORK
THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY
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MISER HOADLEY'S SECRET

A DETECTIVE STORY

BY

ARTHUR W. MARCHMONT

AUTHOR OF "THE HERITAGE OF PERIL," "THE PRICE OF FREEDOM," "THE QUEEN'S ADVOCATE," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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Miser Hoadley's Secret

PROLOGUE

I

THE THREAT

"SILENCE! Silence!" called the ushers, stilling the hum of conversation in the sparsely attended Criminal Court, during the absence of the jury to consider their verdict in a case of attempted murder.

As the jury filed back into the Court, the prisoner—a man of about middle height, but wiry and very muscular in build, with a taciturn, sullen look in his face—watched them with an expression more suggestive of curiosity than anxiety. It seemed as if he was, or wished to appear, indifferent about the verdict.

The judge took his seat on the bench, and, after the usual formal questions, the foreman announced the verdict.

"Guilty!"

There was a slight murmur in the Court, and an old

man who was sitting near the jury-box, and had been anxiously and intently observing them, turned, with a sigh of relief, and looked across at the prisoner in the dock. Then he pressed both his hands on an old stick he was carrying, and bent his head down, only glancing up for a minute when the judge began to address the prisoner, to pass sentence.

"James Linnegan, the jury have found you guilty on all the counts of the indictment, and with that verdict I agree entirely. Your offence is most heinous. But for the fact that the witness, Bloxam, interrupted you at the time, there is little doubt but that you would be on your trial, not merely for wounding this old man, Simeon Hoadley, but for murdering him. Your crime was a most deliberate one, deliberately planned and deliberately executed. You went to the house with murder in your thoughts; and when the first shot that you fired at your intended victim, missed him, you fired a second and wounded him; and you were in the very act of firing a third time, when you were stopped by the woman Bloxam. You are a most dangerous man; and in such a case I feel compelled to pass a severe sentence. The sentence of the court is that you be sent to penal servitude for the term of twenty years."

The prisoner had not raised his head once during the short harangue of the judge, but when he heard the terrible sentence, he looked up, first at the judge, and then round the court in a half-dazed manner. His face went white as death, and he clutched for an instant at the rail in front of him, and then the blood rushed back to his face, and he cried out almost hysterically.

"Twenty years! Twenty years! For nothing?"

The ushers repeated their calls for silence; but every eye turned to the dock, where the prisoner was struggling in a fit of absolutely ungovernable frenzy.

He broke away from the warders who had gone to remove him, and clinging to the dock rail with one hand, he pointed the other at the old man sitting near the jury box.

"I'm innocent. It was they who tried to murder me," he shouted, at the top of his voice, pointing to the old man and the woman Bloxam, who was sitting beside him. "Twenty years! My God, why, I did nothing! But I will do it. Do you hear me, Simeon Hoadley? I'll have your life for this, I swear. If you're not dead when I come out, I'll swing for you, I swear I will; if it's twenty years hence."

The old man cowered and trembled and covered his face with his hands in evident fear, and dared not even look up at the prisoner, who fought and struggled with the constables in the dock, and screamed out threats and curses in a very paroxysm of rage, until he had been forced down the dock steps. Even after he had disappeared, his shouts and cries continued to reach the court, only dying away gradually, as he was carried off to the cells.

The old man sat on, taking no heed that the court was being cleared, until presently one of the attendants came to him, and touched him on the shoulder, saying they were waiting for him to go, in order to close the place.

"Is he safely locked up?" he asked, white even to the lips with fear.

"Yes, he's safe enough now," answered the man smiling. "And so are you mister, for twenty years to come."

"Thank heaven for that!" exclaimed Simeon Hoadley in reply, as he drew his hand across his parched dry lips and rose to leave the court.

II

FOR FREEDOM

"FALL in there; fall in!"

A heavy mist had come down suddenly on the moorland, and the wardens in charge of a gang of convicts were anxious to get them back to the prison without delay.

"Fall in, at once!" came the command, in loud tones of authority.

The men hung back a little, and one or two seemed to hesitate about obeying the order. The mist deepened every moment, and the warders, growing more and more anxious, hurried hither and thither, urging the men to fall in at once.

A few of the convicts stood in a group, talking together in low tones. Then one of them, a tall, burly, powerful man, called out—

"Boys, who'll make a dash for liberty? We shan't have a better chance if we wait for years. Say, who'll follow me?"

"I will," called out one man. "And I, and I," shouted others.

"Stand back, there," rang out the voice of the chief warder, as he levelled his rifle at the ring-leader. "Stand back, or I fire."

"Come on, boys!" was the man's response to the threat, as he rushed upon the warder. The latter fired

point blank at him, but in the confusion of the moment missed his aim, and the next minute his rifle was dashed out of his hands, and he himself was knocked down.

"Hurrah! Down with the beggars!" shouted the big convict, as he leaped over the fallen man, and rushed to head an attack upon the rest of the warders, who were standing together with their rifles leveled at the approaching convicts. The first success, in disarming and overcoming the chief warder, had set the men's blood on fire; they were mad with the hope of liberty, and paid no heed to the rifles.

"Now, boys, all together!" shouted the ring-leader. "We'll soon bowl these chaps over."

"What's the good?" cried one of them. "We can't get away, if we do. Don't try it, mate."

"Who's that traitor? Down with the spy. Down with the jailor's lick-spittle. Who spoke then?"

"I did," answered the man, "and I mean it. I'm no spy; but I'm no fool, either."

"Knock him on the head; brain him with your spade," cried several of the men.

This altercation stayed the onward rush of the men for a moment; but only for a moment; then several of them rushed forward, and a fierce fight ensued.

Meanwhile, one or two of the convicts had set upon the warder, who had been already knocked down; and the man who had spoken against the whole attempt, seeing this, ran to the fallen man's assistance.

"Shame on ye, mates!" he cried, as he seized the man's gun, and stood over him, brandishing the weapon to defend the man and himself from their onslaught.

"Shame on ye! Would ye kill a man that can't defend himself?"

"Out of the way, or we'll kill you, you spy," growled a villainous looking ruffian, raising his spade and aiming a deadly blow at the other. The man parried the blow, and then knocked the ruffian senseless with the butt end of the gun. The rest raised a howl of baffled rage, and rushed upon him in a body. He fought valiantly and with extraordinary agility and skill, and succeeded in beating back the attack, and in wounding one or two of them. But they were too numerous to be kept long at bay, and he would certainly have been killed, if the warders, who had beaten off the attack made on them, had not seen the peril of their comrade and his defender, and come to the rescue. Just as they ran up, the convict received a violent blow on the head, which laid him on the ground by the side of the insensible warder whom he had so bravely defended.

The attempted escape had been prevented, however, and a body of warders, sent out hastily from the prison when the mist had begun to fall, came up at that moment, and the convicts threw down their spades and picks, and gave in.

"Who is it?" was asked of the warder, who was bending over the convict and examining the wound on his head, from which blood was flowing. "Is he dead?"

"No, he's not dead; but he's got a nasty wound on the head. It's that quiet chap, 486. I didn't think he'd got such pluck in him."

"Well, he's a brave chap to stand alone against that

troop of howling devils," answered another warder who had seen the whole attack.

"Yes, he deserves his liberty, and 'll get it, if he don't die, that is," was the reply. Then they ordered the crowd of vanquished convicts to fall in, and picking up the wounded men, carried them at the rear of the line of march back to the prison.

No. 486 was the convict, James Linnegan, who had served five years of his sentence.

CHAPTER I

NO. 50 CLERGY-STREET, CLERKENWELL

"WELL, are you going to have them or not? Just say the word, that's all. I'm not going to stop here all day."

"I tell you they're no good to me. The last I had I lost by. It was all very well when I could manage to get rid of them easily, but now the man's dead who used to take them, and stones cut like that emerald would be known anywhere. Where did you get them?" And old Simeon Hoadley fixed his cold, sharp, gray eyes on the face of his companion, who was offering to sell him some unset stones.

The man gave a short laugh as he answered—

"What's that got to do with it? Are you going to turn particular all of a sudden? I have 'em and you can buy 'em at a price. Ain't that good enough? Don't ask fool's questions."

The two men were sitting in Simeon Hoadley's small room—his office as he called it—at No. 50 Clergy-street, Clerkenwell; a dirty street with a dirtier reputation. On the table between them lay the stones, diamonds, rubies and emeralds, about which they were chaffering and bargaining.

"There's only one stone worth anything," continued

the old man, taking them up one by one and examining them very critically.

"That's a lie," answered his companion, "and you know it. They're all good, everyone of 'em. They're worth near on to a thousand pounds of anyone's money. So there."

The old man started at these words, and put the stones back instantly on to the table, and pushed them across to his companion.

"There, take them away, take them away," he cried. "Take them where fools are ready to believe fools' tales."

"I didn't say I wanted a thousand pounds for 'em," returned the other, laughing at Hoadley's eagerness. "I said they cost a thousand."

"You didn't. You said they were worth it. Take them away, I say, take them away. I wouldn't give more than twenty pounds for the lot. There's only one stone that hasn't a flaw."

"Why, that diamond's worth £500 by itself; you know it is, too," cried the other man, angered at Hoadley's words.

"Fool!" exclaimed the old man. "It isn't worth five pounds. Do you think you can take me in? Watch." He opened a drawer in his table as he spoke, and took out a small tin cup, into which he poured some liquid from a bottle taken from the same drawer. He placed the diamond in it, and kindling a spirit lamp, held the cup over it for a minute or two. In a short time he took the stone out, and examining it very closely through a watchmaker's eyeglass, he had no difficulty in dividing

it into two parts; and he showed the other man that it was composed of two stones, cut flat at the back, and then joined together.

"Two bad halves have had the flaws cut away, and then have been joined to make one stone. It's difficult to detect in certain kinds of setting," he said, "but a fool ought to see it in a naked stone." He spoke almost contemptuously.

"What a do!" growled the other man, with a muttered oath. "Well, you shall have the lot for a hundred," he added.

"Take them away, I tell you; I don't want them," cried Simeon Hoadley, again; "they're not the kind of goods for my purpose."

"Well, hang it, what will you give?"

"I'll give you twenty pounds; and then I shall lose seven pounds by the deal. But I have done pretty well by some you have brought me, and I don't like to see you disappointed about that stone."

"You shall have 'em for fifty," returned the other; and then a long bargaining squabble followed, in which both men grew angry, and high words were interchanged. At the end of it, Simeon Hoadley purchased the jewels for £24 10s. He went to a large safe which stood in a corner of the room, and taking out an old cash-box, counted out all the money that was in it, and swore that all he had in the world was £23 15s. This amount the other man at length agreed to accept, calling Hoadley a miser, skin-flint, screw, and many such terms, to all of which the old man paid not the slightest heed.

"The worst day's work I've done for twenty years," he said, as his visitor was going. "I shall lose ten pounds—perhaps twelve—by the deal."

But, when he came back to the table, after the man had left the house, his manner was by no means that of one who has made a bad or even a doubtful bargain. He smiled to himself, and rubbed his hands together gently, and his face had such an expression of satisfaction, his eyes especially glowing with a light of satisfied cunning, that it was evident he had done well.

He poured the contents of the tin cup back into the little bottle, and put cup and bottle again into the drawer.

"What a fool," he murmured to himself, "not to know his own diamond again." Then he took out the stones he had just purchased, and laid them on the table in front of him. Among them were the two halves of the large diamond. He put these together, and compared them with a large stone which he picked out of a drawer that stood open during the interview.

"Any fool might have seen the difference," he muttered again, as he compared the diamond with the two halves. "But he didn't. What a fool! It's a lovely stone—perfect; without a flaw or speck—a perfect brilliant. He was right. It *is* worth £500, if it's worth a shilling. And he never saw me make the change!" With this he put the two halves back into the drawer, with the tin mug and the bottle.

He had cheated the man. When he had bent down to get out the cup and spirit-lamp, he had substituted a joined stone of his own, for the brilliant which the man had brought; and by simply melting the cement that

bound the two halves of his stone together, he had made the other man believe that his brilliant was false.

This was not the first time, by many a hundred, in which Simeon Hoadley's cunning, in his thirty years of bargaining and dealing, had enabled him to over-reach those who came to him.

He subjected all the stones once more to a close and minute scrutiny; and when he had satisfied himself of their real value—and there was no better judge of this in all London—he divided them into two lots. One consisted of a few small stones, which he intended to sell in order to recoup himself for the outlay for the whole; and the other, which included all the finest and largest stones, notably the magnificent brilliant, he put aside to be kept.

He looked round the room, considering where he should put them.

It was a mean, dirty, poverty-stricken place enough; the furniture being of the commonest, most comfortless, and shabbiest description. A piece of dingy carpet, frayed and threadbare, covered the centre of the room, and showed the grimy floorboards through many a rent and hole. The table had once been a good one—a library table with several drawers—but the leather top was worn completely away, the knobs of the drawers were either broken or missing, and the woodwork was scratched and worn and discolored. Four common wooden chairs were in the room, rickety, scratched, and chipped like the table. The grate was without fender or fire-irons, and was rusty, and dim, and neglected. On one side of the room stood an old bureau that seemed to be tumbling

to pieces with age and decay, and some shelves in a recess by the chimney were much in the same condition, and seemed scarcely able to sustain the weight of the dusty papers and the few books which were piled without order or method upon them. The only thing in the room which showed any signs of care or attention was the large heavy safe, the clean, fresh brightness of which formed a sharp contrast to everything else. Except on this, the dirt and dust and filth had accumulated everywhere in such quantities as to suggest that the place had been untouched by broom or duster for months.

Simeon Hoadley himself was as dirty and untidy as the room in which he sat. His long brown coat was greasy with age, and frayed at the pockets and cuffs, his trousers were jagged and darned and pieced, and his boots were down at heel and patched to such a degree that little of the original leather remained. On his head he wore a very old skull cup, which had started in life as velvet, but from which every trace of nap had long been gone. It was too big for his head—he had found it one day in the street and had worn it every day since—and it would often slip partly off, now behind his head, now over one ear, in a manner that would have provoked any other man. But Simeon had no intention of buying another—he never bought any clothes—and felt no trouble about it.

His one consuming thought was how to get money or money's worth. For thirty years he had striven and fought and labored for that one end; and the craving that had had its origin in want, had grown into his nature and had become part of himself. For thirty years, he had

cheated and robbed and defrauded and lied, until now a bargain had no savor for him in which there was no room for his talents? And for thirty years he had lived so hard a life, had denied himself every luxury, and starved himself so rigorously that now he could not eat the hardest food, or buy the sheerest necessary trifle without a pang of pain and regret at the outlay.

His miserliness had become a mania with him.

Yet he was rich far beyond any expectation he had ever formed in his younger days. When he had first begun to save in early life, he had sometimes laid by a small jewel or two, thinking it a convenient form in which to save, and as his years increased and his means expanded, the love of jewels had developed into a positive passion with him. No matter where they might have come from, found, stolen, or honestly gotten, Simeon Hoadley was always ready to buy jewels. He asked no questions; or if he asked them he cared nothing for the answers that were made. He would buy and take all risks; and so shrewd and cunning and keen was he, that though many thousands of pounds' worth of such jewels had passed through his hands in thirty years he had never made a mistake as to the value of a single stone, and had never had traced to his possession a single stolen jewel.

His love of jewels—especially of diamonds and emeralds—was even a stronger passion than his love of money. To him there was no greater or more fascinating delight than to sit and toy with his diamonds and emeralds. He had them always at hand, hidden in curious secret places. He would take some of them out and lay them on the table, hold them in the palm of one hand and turn them

over fondly and lovingly with the forefinger of the other, murmur terms of endearment to them, place them against his cheek, his forehead, his lips, kiss them as if they were things of life. He worshipped them very much as a savage worships his idol.

When the man whom he had cheated left him, he shut the door of his room carefully, and taking out a number of stones from the places where they were hidden he compared them with those he had just bought, holding them side by side to the light, gauging their weight and thickness, muttering to himself the while, and mumbling caressing words over the stones. He played with them like a child with a treasured toy, and was completely absorbed in the pleasure of the task, and lost to every other feeling but the fierce, intense, concentrated joy of possession.

Someone knocked at the door, after a while; but the miser did not hear the knock, until it had been twice repeated.

"Who's that?" he called out, in a sharp, querulous voice. "Go away; don't bother me. I'm trying to get a nap."

"Here's your food," was the reply, in a woman's voice, unpleasant and deep-toned. "You'd better take it now, you'll sleep all the better for it."

The old man picked up the stones over which he had been gloating, and talking in a shrill tone all the time to cover the sound of his movements, he crept like a thief about the room, putting them back in the places he had taken them from. Then he opened the door, and groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked a tall, gaunt, large-featured woman, with brown, beady eyes, that had a repulsive look.

"I've been taken in, cheated, lied to, robbed," answered Simeon, volubly. "I had twenty-two pounds left in the world, and a scoundrel came and made me give it all to him, for what isn't worth half or quarter of the money. Oh, the fool that I am! The easily robbed, helpless, fool that I am!" and he tore the skull cap off his head, and threw it on the ground, and plunged his hands among his scant grey hair, as if in a frenzy of despair.

"Do you want to spoil that nice new cap of yours?" asked the woman, as she picked it up with a laugh. "So you've been cheated, have you, Simeon? Ha!" and she laughed a mirthless, sneering, dry laugh. "Cheated you, eh? Ha ha! Poor old fool. *You,* cheated? Ha ha! Twenty-two pounds, had you? Why you had only two shillings and a half-penny this morning, so you told me. Must have been raining sovereigns, I should think. Oh, Simeon Hoadley what an old liar you are!"

"Not to you, Bloxam; not to you, dear old friend," mumbled the man, taking her hard, bony hand in his fingers, and speaking in a half-cringing tone. "Not to my trusted old helpmate of ever so many years. How many years is it that you've lived for nothing in this house, having your own rooms like a lady, and priding it with the best of them? Oh, but you are a lucky woman, Bloxam; with so much to enjoy now, and the house to be your own soon, when poor old Simeon lies dead. You are a lucky woman. That twenty pounds would have been yours too, Bloxam, if it hadn't been stolen away from

me," he said, eyeing the woman from under his shaggy brows.

"A lucky woman, am I?" returned the woman, "to have to find you in food every day, to say nothing of having to keep the whole place tidy and clean and neat; and taking care of the house, just to get a roof to lie under. Lucky, indeed; it's yours is the luck—mine's the work."

"It's only taking care of your own, Bloxam," said Simeon, in a soft, sly, conciliating voice, "or what'll be your own some day. Ah, and soon, too, Bloxam, for I'm breaking up, sadly. And this blow, to-day, is enough to knock five years off my life. The villain—the scoundrel—to cheat a poor old man out of half his all! What a proud woman you will be that day, Bloxam, when you're living in your own house, just for all the world like a lady of title. How everybody will envy you!" he added leering at her.

"Well, I shall have to pay for their envy, by the time I get it," said the woman, coarsely, as she went away.

"That you will, you old catamount," said Simeon to himself, as he fastened the door behind her. "If you don't get anyone to envy you till this house is yours, you'll die a disappointed woman, Martha Bloxam. The old frump! To think that I'm going to give her this house, just in return for a few bits of bread day by day! The grasping old hunks!"

The terms on which the miser allowed the woman to stay in the house were that she should wait upon him, and supply him every day with something to eat. Where she got it, or how she lived herself, he did not know,

nor ask, nor care. As an inducement to the woman to keep the bargain, he had agreed to give her the house after his death; and he had given her a document which he pretended was his will, and in which he had left her the house and all that was in it. But like most of his acts this was a mere pretence. He was cheating her, and had not the least intention of keeping the promise he had made.

He took the food she had brought—bread, cold meat and water—and he sat down to the table to eat it. While he was eating he brought some of his diamonds out and played with them, moving them gently with his fingers, turning them over in his hand, and holding them up to admire their glitter, and shimmer, and brilliance. He never tired of doing this, and when, presently, he took up the piece of newspaper, in which the cold meat had been wrapped he still toyed with the stones.

Suddenly, he gave a violent start, and cried out as if in fear. He dropped the paper, and clutched with both hands the precious stones on the table, and glanced round the room with quick, hurried, nervous looks. Then he rose, and with unsteady limbs walked round the room, and put back the gems in their hiding places, his fingers trembling violently all the time.

Then he went back to the table and sank down on the chair, and picking up the paper again read eagerly, and with almost fierce agitation the paragraph that had so disturbed him.

It was the announcement of James Linnegan's pardon and discharge from jail; and the old man's face was white and wet with fear as he read.

CHAPTER II

IN FEAR OF DEATH

"I'LL have your life for this, Simeon Hoadley, I swear, if you're not dead when I come out. I'll swing for you if it's twenty years hence."

The words were singing and sounding and resounding in the old man's ears, as he sat motionless at the table, the scene of Linnegan's conviction five years before, present in his memory, and rendered painfully vivid by his fears.

"He'll do it, he'll do it," he murmured to himself, through his grey, bloodless lips. "He'll do worse; he'll take my wealth. Curses on them! Curses on them!" he burst out, with sudden frenzy, through his clenched teeth, smiting the air with his fists, as he raved against those who had ordered Linnegan's release. "What right have they to go against the judge? The sentence was for twenty years—twenty years, and scarce five of them have passed. What devil's work can it have been? I'm not safe, not safe for an hour. He's a murderer, a murderer in all but fact. The judge said so. 'You went to the house with murder in your thoughts.' So he did; if not that time at many other times. He always wanted

me dead. The judge knew him in a moment. 'You are a dangerous man,' he said, and sent him to jail for twenty years. And now these fools, these law-breakers, these idiots, have let him out to prey on us again. 'I'll have your life for this.' He's a murderer, a self-confessed murderer, and yet they've let him out! 'You went to the house with murder in your thoughts.' And so he did. So he will come again here. I'm not safe for a moment. My jewels are not safe. My God, and I can do nothing!" Then his rage grew beyond the power of utterance, and he bent his head down and groaned, and cursed, and gnashed his teeth in paroxysms of impotent fury and agonizing fear.

Presently he grew somewhat calmer.

"What can I do?" he said, getting up from his chair. "I must do something. How much does he know of what is here? How much did he find out when he was here? Not much; and what he did know wouldn't help him now. I've changed almost everyone of my darlings' hiding places. He won't find them. No one could do that. And I—I would not tell him, if I were to die for my secret. Will he try to kill me! Will his temper last as long as this? Yes; he's a devil, a fiend incarnate. I'm not safe. And if he kill me, what then? He shall hang for it; but he shall not have my jewels. They are for Marion."

Then came a pause in which the man was thinking intently.

"But how can she get them if I am dead? She does not even know that I am here at all, knows nothing; but supposes I am away at work somewhere. That devil

knows it all well enough. What can I do? What can I do? Must I tell Marion everything?"

He passed his long thin dirty fingers through the straggling beard which fringed his hard-beaten, deeply lined face, and putting the ends of hair between his teeth, bit them, as he walked across the room, pondering with close concentrated thought, the problem he wished to solve; and muttering to himself all the time, in an undertone.

After a while, he went back to his chair at the table and sat down, still thinking deeply and closely, and not moving, except as he twisted his gray beard and whiskers with nervous unrest.

Suddenly, he jumped up from the chair, and brought down his hand violently on the table.

"I have it," he cried, quite aloud. "No one knows all but myself; and no one shall, while I live. I won't tell Marion anything. There's no need. I'll write it, so that no one can understand it without the key, and that key shall never be out of my possession, unless it is in Marion's. Yes; that will do it! Then, James Linnegan, you can do your worst. If you kill me, I shall die with the knowledge that my wits have beaten you beforehand, and have laid a trap that will catch you. I see now what I can do. The plan opens. I will cheat you after all. You may grasp the treasure, but, by heavens, you shall gain nothing but a halter." He said this, with an oath and a string of epithets expressive of his hate and fear of Linnegan. "Now, let me think of the details."

The old man plunged again into deep thought, and paced up and down the room, pulling, twisting, and biting

his beard as he walked; while now and then, as an idea struck him, he went to the table and made a note of it; and then immediately resumed his shuffling, shambling, agitated walk.

CHAPTER III

"MARION, DID YOU EVER HEAR ME MENTION THE NAME OF LINNEGAN?"

"I AM sorry I am late, Ralph; but I was kept at the office. There was a lot of work which had to be done at once; it was special, and I stayed. Have you been waiting long?"

"No, Marion, only a few minutes. You are not much behind time. It is only twenty minutes past seven."

"Yes, but I don't like to be even a few minutes late. You know that one of what you call my fads is to do what I say I will at the time I say I will do it."

"Ah, well, I would wait a great deal longer than twenty minutes for the pleasure of walking home with you, Marion," said Ralph Gething, affectionately. "But you know that."

"Yes, I hope I do," answered Marion Jannaway, a rather tall, erect, bright, clever-looking girl, with a smile of pleasure, called up by her lover's words, that gave a very sweet, gentle expression to her clear-cut features. "Besides, I have some news that may please you, and will certainly interest you," she added.

"What is that, dear?"

"Well, what would you think if I were to set up in business on my own account? The project has been sug-

gested to me. You know that I have one type-writer of my own, bought and paid for out of my earnings; and I have nearly enough money to buy another. I can get a girl, who is a capital operator, very clever and quick, to join me if I will pay her about a pound a week, at first. I have had an office, large enough and central enough for my purpose, offered to me for a few shillings a week; and thus all my expenses would be, allowing for wear and tear of machines, ink-ribbons, etc., about thirty shillings a week."

"But what made you think of all this?" asked the man, astonished at the practical and methodical way in which the girl had made her plans.

"I will tell you," she answered. "There has been some little trouble at our office. Our manager, Mrs. Gunthry, has had a dispute with one of our best customers, a Mr. Copplestone, who sends in a great deal of work. I have done very much of this, and he knows it. He has offered to give me the whole of it to do at the prices paid now, and to use his efforts to get me work from among his friends. His work averages quite fifty shillings a week; so that I should start with a clear pound a week over all expenses. Now, what do you say, Ralph?"

"That you have a wonderful little head for making plans," said her lover with a laugh.

"No, don't run away from the point," returned the girl, showing by a slight wrinkle that crossed her brow, that she did not like his answer.

"Well, my dear, I am afraid that I cannot answer off-hand. It might be a serious thing if you were to leave where you are and set up for yourself on the strength of

this Mr. Copplestone's offer, and then find he did not, or could not, do all he promised. Have you any other possible connections?"

"Certainly I have," answered Marion Jannaway, readily. "Possible; probable, indeed; but not certain. I have been at the work four years, Ralph, and have frequently had the control of the whole office. Besides I am the fastest and most correct writer there."

"Dear me, little vanity, are you really?" he said, bantering her.

"I am not saying that out of vanity," replied the girl, in a business-like, matter-of-fact tone. "But that you may see the considerations that weigh with me. It seems to me a chance which I may never have again."

"But what would your old father say?"

"I am my own mistress, so far as he is concerned. If I am able to earn as much money one way as the other, he would say nothing; could have nothing to say, in fact," answered Marion, in a calm, decisive, self-possessed manner.

Ralph Gething made no reply for a moment, and the girl looked at him once or twice during the pause as if to note the expression of his face, but it was difficult to do this in the dim uncertain light cast by the shops and street lamps through the dull November night mist.

"Will it bring us nearer to our goal, Marion, or will it mean that we must wait longer?" he asked quietly.

"It will make no difference as to that, Ralph. You know I must think of my father; and he gets more and more helpless every month. But it will make me independent; and I long for that."

"You can hardly claim to be independent, Marion, when you mean to be always waiting for your father's consent," said Ralph Gething, rather irritably. "I don't see the necessity for that at all. He has not done so much for you that you need to be always thinking of him first, and putting everybody else a long way behind him."

"He is my father, Ralph, and that must be enough for me," answered Marion, calmly. She was an undemonstrative girl, and spoke very quietly. But the antagonism between her father and her lover often caused her much distress, and she had constantly to hold the balance between the two; and to uphold her lover's cause with her father, and her father's with her lover. "I wish you two could be better friends, Ralph. You do not understand my father, or you would be more tolerant, dear."

"I don't wish to be intolerant, Marion; but I certainly do think it is hard that, after he left you to scramble up as best you might in an asylum, he should only begin to take an interest in you now that you have developed a power of earning money, and that his interest should take the form of letting you work very hard in order to keep him. He only dislikes me because he thinks our marriage might interfere with that arrangement."

"Hush, Ralph! Don't talk like that. It pains me," said Marion. "I don't like to hear bitter words from you about anything or anybody, least of all about my father. You must remember that he is very old; that his days of earning money are over; that he is dependent upon me entirely; and that if I were to fail him, he could do nothing but go to the poorhouse. And neither you nor I could bear that that should happen."

"Then are we to go on in this way until his death, or until someone leaves him a fortune?" asked the man, with all a lover's impetuosity.

"If necessary, yes," answered his companion. "But it will not be necessary, if I make this type-writing office anything of a success. And I am mistaken in myself if I cannot do that," she added, very confidently and resolutely. "We can afford to wait a year or two, Ralph, if need be. I'm not twenty-one till next week. Besides, when I am successful, it will be a great help to us. If I seem very practical and business-like," she added, with a smile that gave a great charm to her face, "you must blame my four years' struggle in London. But, it would be a good thing if I were to get together a really good business, wouldn't it? And I don't see why I should not. Or would you be afraid of me, if I developed into a regular woman of business? Would it spoil me in your eyes, dear?"

"It would not alter your nature, Marion; and nothing would ever spoil or change you in my eyes—or my heart," answered her lover. "I think you must be born to take an independent course; for you have a way of convincing one against one's opinions, that is very winning. I am sorry I spoke as I did about your father. You would not be my Marion, if you did not act just as you are doing; and I'll try not to be very impatient. He said this very frankly and affectionately.

"Thank you, Ralph. Of course, it is a sorrow to me that you and my father cannot agree, but we cannot help it. He is very trying sometimes, and says and does things that are very hard to bear. But when I am irritated, I

remember that he is old and helpless; and then my irritation passes away. Besides, if things had been otherwise, I might have grown up a very different kind of girl; like some of those play-kittens we have at the office; and I should not make a good kitten. Nature meant me to work, and certainly my father has helped nature wonderfully."

"Yes, there's no doubt about that," said Ralph Gething, rather drily.

"And it's better so. Well, here we are at Morris-place. Will you come in to-night?"

"No, thank you, I'd rather not. Good-night. To-morrow, as usual, I hope."

"Yes, Ralph. Good-night, dear." And they kissed and parted.

Marion Jannaway's nature was very self-restrained, and there was little or no passion in the kiss she gave her lover; but she loved him very deeply and truly. And when he walked away and was lost in the mist, she looked after him very lovingly, as she stood on the door-step of the house, and thought how lucky she was to have brave, frank, handsome, honest Ralph Gething for a lover; and she gave a little sigh of happiness as she turned away and opened the door.

"Ah, father, you're before me to-night, then," she said, pleasantly and brightly, when she entered their room. "Have you been in long? You must want a cup of tea. I'll get it in a minute, as soon as I have taken off my hat and jacket."

The old man made no reply, except to look up and ask her why she was so late.

"I had to stay at the office, father," she said. "There was some work to do, and of course I stopped to do it."

"Do they pay you for it extra? Extra work ought to mean extra pay," returned the old man quickly and eagerly.

"Of course they do," replied the girl. "But I should have stopped all the same if they did not. It doesn't do in times like these to be particular about an hour or two."

"Not if they pay you; but it don't do to make yourself cheap. How much did you earn?"

"A shilling or two. I didn't stop to count up the number of words. But it will be a help; every little does that, doesn't it?" said Marion, cheerfully, as she busied herself in preparing the tea.

"Can't they cheat you if they count up the words for you?" asked her father, looking up at her from under his heavy brows.

"No I don't think so. I don't think they would attempt it. I have a very shrewd idea of how much I earned. I know the speed at which I can type, and I know how long I worked. Besides I'm not so suspicious as you are, father," said the girl, smiling.

"Ay, you will be some day; when you are a bit older and wiser."

"Why, would you cheat anyone who left it to you to count up the quantity of work done?" asked Marion, looking round at the old man from the fire, where she was toasting some bread.

"Yes, I think I would," answered her father, truthfully enough. "Where one man is square, a hundred are

crooked; and if you don't take a few points that don't belong to you, you only get cheated out of some of those that do. At least," he said, altering his tone, and changing his quick, eager manner for one that was suggestive of helplessness; "that's what I used to think when I could work. Now, I'm only a poor, broken-down old man, useless and of no account, with never a chance of cheating or being cheated for that matter, as I never can get work. Ah, dear!" He sighed, and threw up his hands, as if in helpless regret.

"Well, it's a good thing you can't cheat people if you do want to, father," said Marion. "I don't believe in your philosophy; and it certainly has not paid in your case. I believe that honest work pays. Lies, hypocrisy, double dealing, cheating, cant, and the whole crew of them can't steer the ship properly. If you can't get forward without cheating, you'd better stay behind, say I. And as long as I have health and strength, I mean to walk erect like a Christian. But come along, let's have tea, and never mind commercial morality. Now, tell me," she said, when they sat at the table and she had given him tea and toast, "what have you been doing all day?"

"Eh?" he exclaimed, suspiciously, stopping to look up at her, with a piece of toast midway between his mouth and his plate. "Oh, what have I been doing? Ah, Marion, my child, it's little a poor helpless old man like me can do. I thought—mind you, I thought—and hoped I was going to get a chance of earning a shilling from that old screw, Ezra Gibeon, but I didn't manage it after all. I didn't manage it. I'm a great burden on you, Marion," he said, in a hopeless, melancholy way, "but

it's not my fault, it's not my fault. I asked Ezra if he could give me a job, and he looked at me, and said: 'Simeon Jannaway, old friend, I've known you many years as a faithful, hard-working, unfortunate, honest man; I'll do what I can for you.' Then he went into his shop and brought out something, and said, 'Go, Simeon, and try to sell this,' and he handed me a gold ornament. I tried, and tried, and tried all over London, till my poor old feet ached, and my shaky old legs nearly doubled under me, but I couldn't succeed. Here's the thing. It's a curious seal, isn't it?"

The old man watched the girl very closely all the time he spoke, and he now handed her a seal which he took from his pocket.

It was a little gold seal of a most curious pattern. The design was that of a serpent coiled round the body of a child, whose head formed the flat surface of the seal. The body of the child was of gold and the serpent of ivory, the scales being marked by gold wire of extreme fineness, beautifully inlaid. The eyes of the serpent were two rubies, and the forks of the tongue were tipped with minute diamonds; while over the whole was an exceedingly fine network of gold filigree, studded in many places with tiny rubies, diamonds and emeralds.

Marion held it long in her hands, admiring the delicate workmanship. Then she noticed that the engraving of the seal was a reproduction of the design with the letters "S. J." underneath it, in old English characters.

"You would know that again, wouldn't you, Marion? It's a beautiful thing, Indian," said her father.

"Not beautiful, is it, so much as curious," she an-

swered. "I should know it again. It is a seal one could never forget. By the way, when do you think that Mr. Ezra will let me go over his shop?" she asked. This was in reference to a promise made by her father that he would take her to Ezra Gibeon's shop for her to see the curiosities in which he said the man dealt; but he had never given her the address.

"We must see about that. He has a great many beautiful things. Do you remember this fish? He gave me this to try and sell also," said the old man, glancing furtively at his companion, to see whether she believed readily what he told her.

"Yes, yes, I remember it. I scratched my initials on it. Do you remember? Ah, here they are!" It was a fish-shaped pencil-case of an extraordinary design. The scales of the fish were formed of flakes of mother-of-pearl, and were dotted here and there with minute jewels; the fins and the tail were of gold; and on the tail Marion had scratched her initials in very tiny letters.

"Do the same on the seal," said her father, "and then, if you should ever meet with either of them again, you will be able to recognize it without doubt."

"But what will Mr. Ezra say?"

"Oh, he won't mind," answered her father, shortly. "He laughed, when I showed him your little 'M. J.' on the fish."

He watched her scratch the letters, and then took the seal and examined it closely.

"That's right," he said, and seemed relieved. "Be sure you remember them both."

"But I shall never see them again, father," laughed

Marion; "unless Mr. Ezra gives them to you. He trusts you, you see, despite that miserable theory you mentioned just now."

"Yes, he trusts me, don't he?" he answered shortly, as he put the ornaments into his pocket. "But it wouldn't pay to cheat him, don't you see. There's the difference." He was silent then, and went and sat by the fire.

"Marion," he said to the girl, after a long silence. The girl had meanwhile cleared the table, and sat near him. "Did you ever hear me mention the name of Linnegan—James Linnegan?" and although he tried to speak calmly, he clenched his teeth and knitted his heavy eyebrows.

"James Linnegan? No, father, I don't think so. Who is he?"

"He's a dangerous man, Marion!" The words burst from the man as if his feelings could be restrained no longer, and he felt the relief of speaking to someone of what troubled him. His vehemence increased as he spoke. "A dangerous, desperate man—a man who has done more to ruin me than anyone else. A man who is my enemy and yours. A man to be spurned and dogged and watched and—feared, Marion. A scoundrel, a bully, a murderer—aye, a murderer—in thought and intent."

"Father!" said the girl, in a remonstrating tone, surprised at his violence.

"I forgot—I always do forget when I think of him. But I want you to know the name and to remember it; and if anything ever happens to us, anything that malice, hatred, anger, villainy can prompt an enemy to plot and

plan against us, to look to him as the author of it. Will you do that, Marion?"

"I don't think I understand you quite, father," was the reply.

"Don't wait to understand; it's enough to remember." He laid his hand on her arm as he spoke, and shook it fiercely, and looked into her face with fierce, eager, angry light in his eyes. "He's an enemy—a dangerous, desperate, murderous enemy—whose name should be spat upon by every peace-loving man."

"But what have we done, that he should be an enemy?"

"Nothing, nothing," answered Simeon, angrily, snapping out the words. "Nothing; I tried to help him years ago, and that makes him hate me now. Don't ask questions; remember his name, to hate it as I do; to know him for an enemy, as I do; to long for his death, as I do; but not to fear him, as I do. Crush him, face him, curse him, kill him, have no mercy on him if once he tries to harm us. Never forget his name, for it is hateful enough to be easily borne in mind—and have him hanged, like the dog he is."

Simeon's anger had risen until it had become a passionate frenzy.

"Father, you are not well to-night," said Marion, rising as she spoke. "Your long walk has worn you out. You must go to bed and sleep this excitement away. You are not yourself." She took a candle and ran down to his room, which was on the half-landing below hers and saw that all was comfortable for him. Then she returned and went with him to the door of his room, and kissed him and bade him good night.

She was always kind and thoughtful and gentle with him; zealous for his comfort and careful for his needs; striving in every way to ease the load which his age and helplessness and poverty laid upon him. She had not a suspicion that in every detail of his life he was deceiving her, even as to her own name. The last idea that would ever have entered her head was that this man who had just left her—dirty, ragged, as he persisted in being, despite her—weak and penniless as he seemed, craving a shilling from anyone who would give it him, and living upon the money she earned by long hours of hard work, would lie awake for hours, thinking of his wealth of jewels, reckoning up his riches and falling into fitful sleep only to start up again in a sweat of fear, that his enemy had robbed him of what he valued more even than life itself—his fortune.

CHAPTER IV

MARION'S FATHER DOES NOT COME HOME

MARION had not the slightest suspicion that Simeon Hoadley had so completely deceived her in regard to his occupations. Until she was over fifteen years of age she had lived in a large institution in which he had succeeded in placing her as a child, and when she had left the place to come to him, he had represented himself as Simeon Jannaway, and had never given her any cause to believe that her name was anything but Jannaway, or that he was any other than a poverty-stricken, feeble man, unable to earn his own living. He represented himself as a silversmith, who was past work, and he was always prepared with some plausible tale as to his movements, if she asked any questions.

At the outset of their being together he had had to provide money for their living, but as soon as Marion had begun to earn anything at all, his contributions grew less and less in proportion as her earnings increased. For two years he had lived entirely upon her. Nor was this all. The house in which they lived in Morris-place, Holloway, belonged to the old man; but he assumed such great and distressing anxiety if the rent was not ready at the moment it was due, that this was always the first thing to be paid. Simeon always said he would

take it to the agent himself, and every week he took it from the girl and brought her a receipt.

"It's rent day, Marion," he said to her one morning about a fortnight after the conversation about James Linnegan had taken place. "It's rent day. Are we ready for it?"

"Yes, father, of course we are. I wish you'd tell the agent that if he doesn't send and do the repairs you told him about a week or two ago, we shall have them done and deduct the rent."

"You can't do that, child, you can't do that," answered Simeon, testily. "Do you want us turned out? I don't see anything the matter. The rent we pay is very low and we can't expect anything more."

"Low, do you call it? Eight shillings a week for two rooms and a half—for yours isn't more than half a room, father. I call it very high."

"No, no, my dear, you don't know anything about it. The rooms are worth ten or twelve shillings. If we complain again, he'll put the rent up; sure to."

"Will he," answered the girl, with a laugh. "Then we'll leave, that's all. I suppose they think that because you're an old man and I'm a young girl, they can do as they like with us. But they can't. Besides, I'm thinking seriously of moving so as to be nearer to my work."

"Moving?" cried Simeon, in a shrill, petulant tone, looking angrily at Marion. "Moving, nonsense, Marion, we mustn't do that. I've got used to the place now, and I shan't be here long to trouble you," this with a whine, "and I couldn't bear to move. I'd sooner pay another two shillings more rent." This was a safe liberality seeing

that it was Marion's money out of which the rent was paid.

"Well, we won't say anything, yet. But I have a plan father, that will make it necessary for us to be nearer the Strand, if I carry it out," she answered quietly and firmly.

"I wish you wouldn't take such plans into your head, child. You seem to be getting very self-willed."

"No, no, father, not that. I have no plans except for our ultimate benefit. I want to work as much for you as myself, and this will be a good step forward, if I can manage to see my way."

"You always say it is for my benefit, Marion; that's the nonsensical tale you make about that Ralph Gething. I wish you'd give him up. But there, one might as well wish for a hundred pounds—that's a ridiculous wish enough, too; ha, ha!—as for you to give up what you've once determined to do." He spoke angrily.

Marion did not reply; she was getting ready to go out.

"Don't you hear me, Marion?" he asked, crossly.

"Yes, father, I hear; but it is no use for me to say that which may only make you angry. Why are you prejudiced against Ralph?"

"Because he comes of a bad stock," rapped out her father.

"What do you know of his family, then?" asked Marion, looking intently at her father.

"Eh? What? Why, anyone can see it, child, without knowing anything more about it," answered Simeon, angry at having said what he did not wish to say.

"Oh, I see. Well, father, you mustn't always be too

quick to judge by the appearance of anyone whom you don't like. I'm afraid I can't accept that as a reason for giving up Ralph," said Marion, quietly. "Well, I must go, or I shall be late. Will you take the rent as usual?"

"Yes, of course I will; do you want to have us turned out of house and home?"

He held out his hand for the money, and counted it carefully as he received it.

"Smith won't take this sixpence, Marion," he said, putting on the table a coin that was a good deal worn.

"Then he must go with sixpence short, father," she answered, with a laugh. "I have no more silver; but I don't think he's so particular as all that. However, we must run the risk, this week I'm afraid."

"Ah, it's easy to turn it off with a laugh in that way, Marion; but if you knew the battles I have had with him, and the way he examines every coin I give him, you would not laugh, I can tell you."

"Well, I'll see if I can find another for you," she answered; "I don't want to make the task unpleasant for you, dear. Yes, I have another; here it is. And now, do you want any money to-day from your little banker?" she asked, going to him and kissing him on the forehead.

"No, child, not to-day," he replied, kissing her in return. He was as fond of the girl as he could be of anyone beside himself. "Good-bye. Try to get home early; it's lonesome to come back and find you away; but don't come if you can earn any money by a little extra work, of course. Here's the packet."

"Oh, that mysterious packet; I had almost forgotten it." He gave her a letter, as he spoke, done up in a

large envelope, and fastened with a number of large, red seals.

"You know the seals by this time, I suppose."

"Yes," answered the girl. "The impressions are from that curious serpent seal of Mr. Ezra's. But do you know you are subjecting me to a sore temptation—to give me the packet every morning, and to take it back again at night; to make me promise not to look at it—unless something happens that I hope and believe will never happen; and to make me believe that it is something as important as it is mysterious? Do you know, father, if I were like other girls my fingers would itch and burn and throb until they had broken the seals. It's fortunate for you I'm not curious," she ended with a very pleasant smile.

"If you were like other girls, you wouldn't have the packet at all, I can assure you. I may be wrong—perhaps I am, and perhaps shall laugh at it all some day, as you do now. But I don't think so—I don't think so. When I *can* laugh at it, perhaps I'll tell you what it all means. But I can't do either yet. So mind the packet. Guard it as if worth a lot of money, and if you ever miss me—open it. And, remember, that I was always glad you learnt type-writing, as that will always stand you in good stead, if you get into any difficulty."

"Type-writing! Why what on earth has that to do with the packet, father?" asked Marion, interrupting and smiling.

"Packet or no packet, child, the type-writing may always be a friend in need to you," answered her father. "Never forget that."

He spoke so gloomily that the girl was touched.

"Good-bye, father, I must go, or I shall miss my tram. I wish you didn't look so solemn and sorrowful. Good-bye; I declare you make me quite unwilling to leave you; but I must go;" and she sighed and kissed him again and ran down the stairs.

Before she reached the bottom of the stairs an impulse seized her to go back to him. It was a very unusual thing for her to yield to impulsive feelings of the kind, but this took a very strong hold of her, and she went up to the room again. She felt that as he seemed down-hearted, she would try and cheer him a little.

She found him walking moodily up and down the room, with knitted brows, and thoughtful expression. She went to him and laid both hands on his shoulders.

"Don't be down-hearted, dad," she said, looking at him very affectionately, and speaking very gently. "I hope to have such good news to tell you in a day or two."

"Good news, Marion. What about?"

"Good news for us both, dear," she answered. "Good news about money. I think that in a few days from now I shall be able to tell you that I've doubled my income. Wouldn't that be good news? I didn't mean to tell you until it was all settled, and I wanted it to have been a surprise for my birthday, next week. But you seem in low spirits this morning, so I thought I'd just try to cheer you up a bit."

"You're a good girl, Marion; a good, kind girl, and I haven't treated you as I ought to have done. But maybe it will be all right some day," said Simeon. Even his hard, selfish nature was touched by the girl's simple,

tender kindness. "You must not think too hardly of me, child."

"Think hardly of you. No, no, not that. I should never do that, father. But now I must really go this time, or else my business reputation for punctuality will be spoiled. Good-bye. I've given you something pleasant to think about, haven't I? For after another three of four days, I do not mean you to do another stroke of work for the rest of your life. There, that's my plan, and now it's all out. Good-bye."

She kissed him again and laughed cheeringly, and then went hurriedly away.

"Should I tell her?" said Simeon, standing where she had left him, and looking at the door as if she was in sight. The girl had for once pierced through the thick surface of the man's selfishness, and he was more deeply stirred than he had been for many, many years. "What would she say? Could I trust her, or would she be then like other women, and want to spend, and spend, and spend, until every shilling was gone. No," he said, shaking his head, as he resumed his walk up and down the room. "No; she wouldn't forgive me. And I couldn't bear to see every penny wasted, after it's taken me years to get together. No; she's a good girl—like her mother. But it wouldn't do to tell her. At least not yet—not yet," and soon afterwards he put on his hat, and took his old stick, and set off for Clergy-street.

Marion that evening was punctual in her appointment with Ralph. They were to meet near to the Angel at Islington. Ralph always came along the City Road, and Marion had walked up Pentonville Hill to the Angel,

where they were to meet and walk to Holloway together. When the girl reached the place, however, her lover was not there.

She had a great deal to think about, as the project of her starting an office on her own account was ripening fast, and she would have to decide definitely in a day or two. She had made up her mind to take the plunge, but there were a number of arrangements to be considered and details to be completed, and her thoughts ran very easily and readily to them, whenever she was not at work. She walked up and down thinking carefully and intently, and did not pay anything like such heed as she would have done usually, to the time that slipped by. A quarter-past seven came; half-past; a quarter to eight; and at last eight o'clock boomed out from a neighboring clock, and Ralph had not come.

Something had kept him, thought Marion, and she stood at the busy corner and looked for him along the City Road. She felt that she must not stay any longer, as her father would be waiting; and she decided to get into a tramcar.

As soon as she had formed the decision: for with her in small just as in large matters, she was promptness itself in taking a course upon which she had once fixed: she crossed the road to get into a car, and at that moment, Ralph came running up.

"I'm so sorry, Marion, but I couldn't get away. I was kept at the office by a man—I was afraid you'd be gone. I didn't a bit expect to find you here still."

"I didn't see you, Ralph," answered Marion. "And

I quite strained my eyes trying to look down the City Road. I was just going."

"I—I came the other way, up here," pointing to the Great John Street Hill, which leads up from Clerkenwell—"I had an appointment on a matter." He was so breathless with the haste he had made that he appeared almost confused.

"You are out of breath, Ralph," said Marion. "Have you run all the way from the office? You shouldn't run like that."

"No, I haven't come from the office. I had to meet a man in Clerk—down that way," throwing his hand generally in the direction of Clerkenwell, "down Farringdon Street way; and this, you know is the nearest way through."

"Why you said just this moment that you were kept at the office, Ralph," said the girl, laughing merrily. "You'll have to tell me better tales than that, sir," she said, playfully, "or else I shall easily catch you in any little peccadilloes."

"Shall I? Oh, very well. But if I have to put a guard on my tongue for every five words that I speak, it won't always be very pleasant," answered Ralph Gething, crossly and rather coarsely. Marion was surprised and hurt at the rebuff.

"You will have no need to put a guard on your tongue, until you do, or think, things which you want to hide from me, Ralph; and that will be a bad day for us both, and a sad day, too. I meant nothing but banter in what I said; and should have thought nothing, if you had not seemed to take what I said so seriously."

The man glanced up at her, as if a little startled at her last words.

"I am sorry, Marion. Forgive me. I was angry with myself for being so late, and angry with those who kept me. There was nothing more." But there seemed to be some restraint in his words which affected the girl; an absence of complete truthfulness which jarred upon her. There was nothing which roused her resentment more quickly than any form of deception or concealment. It was so absolutely foreign to her own nature and instincts, that a suspicion of it was enough to disquiet her.

"I did not ask you where you had been, Ralph. I should not do that, you know. You volunteered what you said, as if in explanation, and I was only laughing when I pointed out your contradiction of your own story. But I am sorry I did that, as it annoyed you."

"No, dear, it didn't annoy me really. It was only a slip of the tongue," said Ralph Gething, who had now recovered his composure in a great measure.

But the incident produced an unpleasant effect upon Marion and the man's crossness served to impress upon her memory what she might otherwise have forgotten directly. The walk was not so enjoyable as usual, and there was a constraint which did not wear off all the way to Morris-place, and the girl was a little low-spirited when they parted.

Her father had not returned, and Marion made haste to get some tea ready for him; and when she had done this, sat down to wait.

Although she had her business plans to occupy her

mind—and the little difference between Ralph and herself could not but make her thoughtful—she began to grow uneasy when a neighboring clock struck ten, and her father had not yet returned.

He was very rarely out after nine or half-past nine; and on almost every former occasion he had told her beforehand of any intended absence.

Her anxiety increased as the time passed, and when another hour had gone by, and eleven o'clock struck, her nervousness deepened into positive fear of some harm having happened to him. She listened to every footfall in the street, and went constantly to the window to see if there were any signs of his coming.

All the gloomy forebodings which had oppressed her father during the last few days recurred to her memory and added to her dread.

She could not go to bed while he was absent, and thus she passed hour after hour in great distress, her fears growing with every hour. Early in the morning she fell asleep from sheer weariness, but after an hour or two she woke with a violent start from a dream which her anxiety and dread had caused.

Her father had not returned, and she passed a weary time of vigil, full of distressing thoughts of possible evil and of vague, uncertain ideas of the steps she ought to take, if he did not return by daylight, or let her hear something of his movements.

But when the morning came the girl was still waiting and watching wearily, without tidings of any kind.

CHAPTER V

MARION LEARNS THE TRUTH

MARION was very loath to go to the office without making some special efforts to find out why her father had not returned: but as there was a great pressure of work, and one of the girl-clerks was absent, she felt compelled to go.

It was a proof of her great powers of concentration and resolution that she was able to do her work with her accustomed skill and speed, notwithstanding the harassing anxieties that distressed her, and the fatigue and weariness caused by the sleepless, restless vigil of the night.

She arranged, however, to leave the office early, explaining that she was much troubled by certain matters at home. She hurried to Morris-place with all speed, in the hope that her father would have arrived home.

But he was not there, and there was no news of him.

It was now clear to her that she must take some measures to find out what had become of him. His absence could not be the result of accident. She felt sure that, knowing she would be anxious about him, he would

have sent her some kind of message to explain his absence, if he had been free to do this. She must therefore find him.

But how was she to do it? What course was she to take? These questions occurred to her readily enough, but they were as difficult to answer as they were easy to ask.

Her first thought was of Ralph Gething. It was very likely he would know what to do. He was in a lawyer's office, and no doubt would be able to advise her well enough.

She went out immediately, and walked to the house where he lived. It was not far away. She knew he would not yet be back from the office, but she determined to leave word for him to come to her the moment he reached home. She left the message with Mrs. Gething, and the latter asked her if anything was the matter, as she saw that Marion was pale and troubled. But the girl did not say anything as to the cause of her trouble. She was quiet calm and self-possessed, though pale and rather weary; and she left at once to return to Morrisplace.

On the way it occurred to her that it would be best to telegraph to Ralph, to urge him to come to her immediately, and she did this. She said nothing more in the telegram than that she must see Ralph immediately.

Then she went back home. There was no news there; and the girl worried and fretted, thinking what ought to be done.

About half an hour after her return a telegram arrived. She tore it open with feverish haste and trembling

fingers; hoping it was from her father, but doubting the possibility of his going to the expense of a telegram.

It was from Ralph.

"Am detained now. Cannot get away till late—probably nine o'clock—will come then. R."

She threw it down on the table with a gesture of disappointment. It was now about half-past five. If Ralph left the office at nine o'clock he could not arrive before half-past nine at the earliest moment. There were four hours of inaction and waiting, and then it would probably be too late to do anything that night. The suspense was unbearable.

She must act for herself—she felt that now. She had better go to the police and give them a description of her father. She disliked this course very much, but there was nothing else to do. She could not, however, make up her mind to do it at once, and resolved to wait one hour longer. If her father did not return at half-past six, she determined to go to the police.

In the meantime she felt the need of taking some food. She had had nothing all day. It was impossible to tell what might be ahead of her—what trouble, work, or anxiety—taxing all her strength to the utmost, and calling for all her resources of mind and body, and she knew that she must husband these in every way.

She therefore cooked herself a substantial meal, and ate it, though without any appetite. It was her duty, and she compelled her disinclination to give way to her will.

At half-past six there were still no signs of her father, and she put on her hat and jacket to go to the police.

As she was putting on the jacket some association of ideas made her remember for the first time the packet which her father had given her.

"How stupid of me to forget it till this moment," she exclaimed. "But I never thought of it. Poor father," she murmured, as she held the envelope to the light of the lamp, and examined the old man's scratchy, scrawling writing upon it.

It was a large sized commercial envelope, made of thick, rough paper, and was rather crumpled and dirty now, through having been kept in the pocket of father and daughter. There were no less than five impressions of the peculiar snake seal, in red wax, on the back, and of these only two were cracked. Three remained quite perfect, and as the girl looked at them she recalled the two occasions on which she herself had seen the seal in her father's hands.

Then she hesitated a little as to whether she ought to open the packet yet, or wait a little longer.

"If you ever miss me, open it!" had been her father's words, among the last he had spoken to her.

On the envelope, moreover, there was a direction to the same effect. "This envelope is to be opened by none but Marion Jannaway; and by her, only, in the event of my not returning home to Morris-place at any time."

This determined her, and she cut one end of the envelope, in order not to break the seals, and drew out the contents.

The words that she read filled the girl with astonishment and amazement.

"MARION,—If you have obeyed my wishes, you have not opened this until you have missed me. I have a strange story to tell you; one that will move you deeply. I have deceived you; have been constantly deceiving you for many years. I am writing this to let you know the truth in the event of that happening, which I have a presentiment is going to happen very soon—my death. I have lived a double life, under a double name. To you I have always been your father, Simeon Jannaway, poor, struggling, helpless, and dependent. Others have known my real name, Simeon Hoadley, of 50 Clergy-street, Clerkenwell. It is there that you must seek tidings of me, when you miss me. There is only one man in the world who knows that I am not poor as you have thought me; who knows that years ago, I was what many people would call rich. That man is my deadly enemy. Five years ago he attempted to murder me; and was punished for his crime, by being sentenced to penal servitude for twenty years. Then, he took an oath that he would kill me, if I was alive when he came out of prison. He is already free and is likely at any moment to kill me. His motives are two—hatred of me, and desire for my riches. Do you understand that, Marion? Riches. I am rich! I, who seemed never to have a penny piece; who took your earnings to pay for my food and lodgings; who went in rags, and boasted to you when I had earned a shilling; am rich beyond your wildest dreams. If I am dead when you read this, look for my murderer in that man. His name is one I told you never to forget: James Linnegan. Remember, James Linnegan. The police know him well.

Tell them it is he who has killed me, and remind them of his threat to murder me, uttered in the court when he was convicted, five years ago.

"Now, remember also that you will have all I possess. Everything will be yours; everything; but on this condition. You must revenge my murder; hunt down my murderer without mercy; hunt him down to death. I charge this upon you. He thinks to kill an old helpless man without any friends to avenge him. It is your task, your work, your solemn duty to prove him mistaken, to prove that I am not helpless nor without friends, but that you are powerful enough to bring him to justice.

"As to his designs upon my wealth, I have taken measures to thwart them. Just as you will prove that he is mistaken in thinking he can murder me with impunity; so you will have the wealth he covets. His lust for riches shall destroy him. Go to the manager of the Clerkenwell branch of the Capital Bank, where you went with me recently when I pretended to you that I would get you some typewriting work. Give him the enclosed letter and he will explain all to you, and give you certain papers which I have deposited with him. The papers that you will receive at the bank are my will made in your favor; a list of all I possess, fastened to my will, and the deeds of the house in Clergy-street, and that in Morris-place. Both are mine. Now, *bear this in mind. Do not sell a stick or stone of either house, until you have read all the papers at the bank.* This is *most urgent.* Read them; learn them; study them until you understand

them. You alone perhaps will ever be able to read them. If you are beaten in any of your struggles, remember that you have always your *typewriter* to rely upon. Remember this *always*. You have been a good, faithful daughter, prove your love now, by avenging me. I leave you all I possess, *on this one condition.*

"Look for my murderer in James Linnegan.

"SIMEON HOADLEY.

"Known to you as—SIMEON JANNAWAY."

The first effect of this letter upon Marion was to confuse and frighten and distress her beyond measure.

Had she been a woman accustomed to give way to her feelings, she would not improbably have fainted, or turned hysterical.

Instead of this, however, when the first dazed feeling had passed off, the letter had the effect of bracing up her energies and resolution. It gave her what she had especially needed, before reading it—a definite plan of action.

She read it again, slowly and deliberately, pausing at many parts of it to consider their significance, and tried to grasp the full meaning of all that was written.

When she had finished the second reading, she had come to the opinion that her father was dead.

In her heart there was no feeling of resentment against him for all that he had made her suffer needlessly; no thought of his selfishness, miserliness, harshness, petty cruelty, meanness, or deceit.

She was full of deep regret at his loss, and hot anger against those who had killed him.

A set impression sharpened her clear, resolute features

as she walked about the room, holding the letter in her hand, and thinking of her father.

She recalled all the better traits of his character and none of the harsher. She thought of what he had done for her, and magnified it many times over, remembering nothing that was not good. He was her father; he had acted according to his nature; had done what had seemed good to him. They had not looked at life from the same standpoint; but he had never sought to turn her from the course which she had thought right. Such as she was, she owed it all to him. Now that he was gone, she was ready to credit him with everything, and her memory inspired by her charity, painted out the man's faults and vices and foibles, with glowing colors taken from the palette of her own nobleness of nature.

To her he had been kind, after his own way, and she accepted in all sincerity and strength the charge he had laid upon her. If he was dead—and she believed he was—she would do her utmost to bring the murderer to justice. She swore no fanciful, romantic vendetta; but the fortune that he had left to her—whatever might be the amount—should be devoted to the purpose for which it had been left! and no effort of hers should be spared to bring this miscreant to justice.

She was quiet, calm, resolute, decided and brave, as she came to this conclusion, and with customary promptness she prepared to take immediate action.

What was to be the first step? Should she go at once to Clergy-street, or to the police? She decided to go first to Clergy-street. She went to the window and looked out. It was a dark, drizzling, foggy evening. It was all the

better to hide her movements, she thought, as she put the papers into her pocket and started upon her strange errand.

While she was in the tramcar on her way to Clerkenwell, one result of the news contained in her father's letter which had not struck her before, occurred to her. If his name was not Jannaway, but Hoadley, she herself was really Marion Hoadley.

The name sounded strange and unpleasant to her ears, as she repeated it to herself several times, in a whisper. She did not like it, and did not like to have to make any change.

As Marion Jannaway she was known everywhere in the little world in which she lived. If she had to tell everybody that her name was not Jannaway, but Hoadley, she might have to enter into explanations and reasons for the change; moreover, she reflected, shrewdly enough, that if she herself had to take any direct part in tracing out this mystery, she could do so with greater advantage as Marion Jannaway than as Marion Hoadley; and this made her resolve that she would put off the change of name as long as possible.

When she reached the Angel, it was raining fast, and she drew her waterproof closely round her as she left the car.

A constable told her the way to Clergy-street, and looked at her as if in some surprise that she should ask for such a street.

"It's a roughish sort of street, miss," he added, "with none of the best characters in some of the houses. It's

one of those streets that look best by daylight," he said, drily.

She thanked him for his caution, but hastened at once to make her way to the place. She found it without much difficulty, and then realised all that the policeman had meant by his words.

It was a little, narrow street, with small houses on either side, and looked anything but a safe and inviting place. But the task which the girl had to perform was not one in which she was to allow fancies or prejudices to stand in the way.

She thought for a moment that her father might be in danger, perhaps at that moment in need of help; and she plunged without hesitation into the gloomy, wretched looking street.

CHAPTER VI

"THERE IS DEATH IN THE ROOM"

MARION was a brave, and, indeed, a daring girl, but her heart beat very quickly, as she passed one or two men, who were loitering at the street corner and in some of the doorways. She took no notice of them, or seemed to take none, but walked on, as if she knew the street well.

She was wondering which was the house, No. 50, belonging to her father. The houses were all built on the same plan, just the ground floor with one story above; the front door being on a level with the pavement. She could not read the numbers on the door in passing, as the figures on the little oval plates were too small.

About thirty or forty yards down the street on the right hand side, was a lamp which threw its light on two doors. She slackened her pace, and by going close to these, she managed to read the numbers. They were 15 and 17. This showed her that she was on the wrong side of the road. She crossed over and made for a lamp some distance along on the opposite side. The number on a door near to it was 34.

No. 50 would be the eighth house from that.

Marion scanned the houses very closely as she passed them; and she noticed that No. 40 was the first of a row of

houses of a rather different character. They stood higher, the front doors having two steps leading up from the pavement. They appeared to be better built and stronger, while the frontage was wider.

As she passed, she heard from one or two of the houses sounds of singing, shouting and quarrelling; the voices of men and women roaring some noisy chorus, varied with bursts of rude, rough laughter, with here and there oaths and fierce angry words. But in the houses next to No. 50, all was still and quiet enough.

She stood for a moment when she reached the house, and looked at the windows and door, and hesitated what to do. But it was only for a moment. The thought that her father might be there, urged her to action, and finding the bell-handle, she pulled it vigorously. The bell seemed to be situated close to the door, for she heard it very distinctly, and could even note its sound as its edge struck against the wall or some other obstacle, owing to the violence with which the handle had been pulled.

Marion strained her ears to listen, but all she could hear was the sound of the bell as it clanged and echoed through the house; and when that died away, all was silent and still as the grave.

If there had been anyone in the house able and willing to open the door, they must have heard the peal of the bell. Marion recognised this, and regarded it as confirmation of her former fears.

There was a knocker on the door, and her next act was to use this in long, loud, vigorous raps. Then she listened as eagerly as before; but not a sound could she hear.

Then she tried the door; but it was securely fastened.

Next, she went to the window and tried if that would open; but it resisted her efforts.

She knocked and rang once more, but getting no reply, and hearing one or two windows and doors open close at hand, she turned away and walked quickly up the street, to go to the police. There was no alternative left.

She had not walked many steps before she perceived that she was being watched and followed. She quickened her pace in order to reach the end of the street, but she heard the man, who was following, begin to run. She looked back, but through the fog and mist, she could see little more than a shadow, bending down close to the houses and coming after her at a quick pace.

She stepped from the pavement into the roadway and began to run. The end of the street was not more than fifty yards away. Then a shrill whistle was given by the man behind, and was answered from two directions in front of her. She was evidently hemmed in, and soon heard footsteps coming towards her.

She stopped, undecided what to do, and then crossed the road and stood still in the shadow of one of the houses. But she was seen and followed, both by the man behind her and one of those in front.

She began to regret her rashness in having come into the place alone, and was wondering what the men would do to her, when another whistle sounded from the end of the street ahead, and all the three men walked rapidly away from her, and disappeared in the mist. She walked and ran as fast as she could to the end of the street, and found there the reason for the change of the men's actions.

Two policemen stood at the corner. She went up to them at once, and asked to be taken to the nearest police station that she might see the Inspector.

The policemen at first were inclined to be suspicious, and questioned her closely as to her reasons for wishing this. But Marion parried all their questions by merely repeating what she wished.

After some hesitation, they told her where the station was, and then one of them walked with her.

"You wish to see me?" asked the Inspector, coming to Marion after he had heard the report of the constable.

He was a tall, pleasant-looking, bearded man, with a grave, kindly manner.

"What is it you want? I am Inspector Martin."

"I should like to speak to you privately," said Marion, glancing round at the other men who were in the office.

"Certainly. Will you come this way?" He led Marion to a private room, placed a chair for her, and sat down at a large office table, and turned towards her to listen to what she might wish to say.

Marion felt rather diffident at first, and scarcely knew how to begin the story she had to tell. She paused a moment to collect her thoughts.

"I have come to you because I am in trouble—great trouble," she said.

The Inspector bowed, but did not speak.

"My father who is old, and feeble, and helpless—" then she hesitated, as the words of his letter recurred to her memory and seemed to belie this statement—"at least —yes, he is old and feeble, and he has disappeared. He

should have come home to me yesterday evening, but I waited for him all night in vain, and all day to-day, and I have reason to fear there has been foul play."

"Ah," said the man, breaking silence. "Let me ask what is your name and where do you live?"

"My name is Marion Jannaway, I live at 18 Morris-place, Halloway. My father's Christian name is Simeon. But, I believe—" here she hesitated again—"that he is also known by another name."

"You are his daughter and believe this—you do not know it? What is the other name?" This was asked with some suspicion.

"Hoadley—Simeon Hoadley," answered Marion.

"What? Old Simeon Hoadley, of Clergy-street?" exclaimed the Inspector.

"Do you know him, then?" asked Marion, looking up at the other's face. A new fear had occurred to her, lest his disappearance could be accounted for on reasons of police.

"Yes, I know him—by repute," answered the Inspector, much more guardedly. "You are his daughter, you say? I thought you gave me the name of Jannaway?"

"Yes!" replied Marion. "But I have only learnt since yesterday, since he has been away, indeed, that his name was Hoadley. I had never heard of Clergy-street, and did not know that he ever went there."

"How did you learn this?" asked the Inspector, suspiciously.

"That, I cannot explain at present," said Marion, after a moment's consideration, during which she decided not to mention the letter from her father. "I will do so

should it become necessary," she added, seeing that her reply produced an unfavorable impression. "I know also that for some time he has been in fear of violence from someone who had threatened him, and that he was in dread of death."

"Do you know the nature of Simeon Hoadley's business or occupation at Clergy-street?" asked the Inspector, looking searchingly at her.

"No," answered Marion, readily. "As I have said, until an hour or two ago, I had no idea that he ever went to the house."

"How did he earn his money to maintain you, then? Do you know that?"

"I have maintained him," replied Marion gently. "I am engaged at the type-writing office of Mrs. Gunthry, where I have been for four years, and during more than half of that time, I have maintained my father, whom I have always regarded as unable to work. Before that, I was in the Hemel Work School, at first as an ordinary child inmate. I was educated there—afterwards, I stayed for a year as class superintendent. You can make any inquiries you please."

"I do not doubt you," replied the Inspector. "But your story is a very peculiar one. What do you wish me to do for you?"

"I should like the house in Clergy-street forced open and searched. I am afraid of foul play," replied Marion, instantly and decidedly. "I have been to the house myself, to-night, and have rung and knocked, but could make no one hear."

"You have been to the house to-night?" asked the In-

spector, looking at the girl in astonishment. "Did you know the character of the street? Were you alone?"

"Yes, I was alone. A constable to whom I spoke at the Angel warned me; but I could not think of risk when I remembered that my father might be in want of help. But I know now that I acted rashly; as I was followed, and I should have been robbed, I think, if two constables had not happened to come to the end of the street at the moment."

"You are a brave girl, Miss Jannaway," said the Inspector, admiringly. "I will do what you wish and send at once to Clergy-street."

"I should wish to go as well, if you please," said Marion.

Then the Inspector went out of the room for a minute, and when he returned, he was accompanied by a red-haired, clean-shaven man, not in uniform and rather shabbily dressed.

This was Detective-Sergeant Mostyn, who, as the Inspector said, would take the matter in hand. Inspector Martin told the detective all that Marion had said.

"Better go at once, sir," he said, rising directly the Inspector had finished. "I can ask any questions as I go along. Should I take some one with me?"

"Yes, take Adams with you. Let me know at once, if you make any important discovery."

"Yes, sir," replied Mostyn, and Marion saw a meaning look pass between the two men, which at the time she misinterpreted through not knowing Simeon Hoadley's evil reputation among the police.

Marion and the detective left the station together, and

they were joined very soon by another constable in plain clothes. Acting on instructions from Sergeant Mostyn he hurried on in front of them and was soon lost in the mist.

"Are you Miss Jannaway, or Miss Hoadley, if you please," asked the detective, when they had walked some little distance in silence. "Excuse my asking the question, but I did not gather this from Mr. Martin."

"I am known as Miss Jannaway," answered Marion.

"What is your reason for suspecting foul play?"

This was a home thrust, but Marion parried it.

"Chiefly because of my father's fears of ill-treatment," she said.

After that the man asked no more questions, and the two walked quickly in the direction of Clergy-street. As they were crossing a road near to Clergy-street, Marion stopped and gave a little exclamation of surprise.

"Ralph!" she cried, as they came upon a man standing at a corner of a street. "Ralph, is that you?"

"Marion," exclaimed Ralph Gething, in a tone of astonishment. "What on earth are you doing here? Who is this?"

Sergeant Mostyn looked at the two suspiciously. It was his custom whenever anything surprised him to regard it as unfavorable to those persons whom it might concern, until a full explanation had been given. It was a side application of the general principle that underlay his conception of criminal investigation; that all people are guilty who cannot prove their innocence at a moment's notice.

He stopped a moment and looked inquiringly at Marion.

"This is Detective-Sergeant Mostyn, Ralph," she said, addressing her lover; and then she told him some of the circumstances which had brought her there.

They walked together, Ralph and Marion, a little behind the detective.

"I thought you could not get away, Ralph," she said. "I received your telegram."

"Oh, yes. I was detained, but I managed to get out a little bit earlier and came here as I had to meet a man. But I was just coming on to Morris-place." He added the last words as if they were an after-thought, and he was so evidently constrained and confused that Marion felt a little uneasy.

"Where are you going now?" asked Ralph, a moment afterwards; he had not understood what Marion had told him.

"To my father's house here in Clergy-street," answered Marion. "I am afraid that he has met with some mishap."

"What?" exclaimed Ralph Gething, stopping in his walk. "You don't mean that?"

"I do," answered Marion. "I fear that the worst happened to him last night, and that he is dead."

"Great heavens," cried her companion, "how awful! Whom do you suspect?" And then, while the girl's eyes were fixed on him, he seemed to make a great effort to recover himself, and walked on by her side.

Sergeant Mostyn and the constable, Adams, were already engaged in trying the door and windows carefully, and in examining the whole house closely from the outside, when Marion and Ralph Gething arrived.

"This is Mr. Ralph Gething," said Marion to Sergeant Mostyn. "A great, a very great friend of mine."

"Yes?" was the reply, spoken interrogatively. "And of your father's as well?"

"Miss Jannaway and I are engaged to be married," put in Ralph, and Marion noticed that his voice had not even yet quite recovered its ordinary tone.

The detective seemed satisfied with the answer, and turned to his companion.

"Before we knock or ring, Adams, I think you had better get round to the back. You know the archway down below here, some fifty yards. You can get from there along the back walls. Examine the back doors and windows carefully, and let me know when you have done so by knocking pretty smartly at the back door. I shall hear you."

The man went away quickly, and the other three waited in silence for the signal.

As soon as he heard it, Sergeant Mostyn rang loudly and knocked vigorously at the front door. There was no response. He repeated the ring and knocked again more loudly than before, but without producing the slightest effect. "There is no one in the house—no one alive, that is," he said without thinking to whom he spoke. "We had better make a way in. Have you any keys of the house?" he asked.

"No, none," replied Marion.

"We shall probably be able to get in more easily from the back," he said, "and certainly without causing so much notice to be taken of us. Are you afraid to stop here, while I go round to the back?"

"No, I think not," answered Marion, not very confidently. "You won't be long, shall you?"

"No, not more than a few minutes."

Marion and Ralph stood close together, well under the shadow of the house, and scarcely spoke during the time of the detective's absence. They heard more than one window put up; and voices, speaking in gruff whispers, seemed to come to them through the mist. Some footsteps sounded on the pavement but they saw no one.

Soon they heard a slight noise inside the house, and Marion took Ralph's hand and clasped it rather tightly. The next few minutes would, she knew, be of the utmost import to her, and she braced up every nerve in her body.

Someone was creeping cautiously along the passage to the front door and it was opened almost noiselessly. Sergeant Mostyn signed to them both to enter, and they passed quickly up the steps and into the house, while the man closed the door behind them, immediately.

"Please to make as little noise as possible," he whispered.

Then to Marion he put a trap question, so naturally that had she been deceiving him, she might readily have been caught.

"Which was your father's room?" he asked.

"I don't know," she whispered, in reply.

"This one!" answered Ralph Gething, in the same breath. "At least," he added, greatly confused. "I think so—I should think so that is. It is the most likely room."

"So it is," answered Sergeant Mostyn, seeming to take no more notice of the answer.

But Marion strained her eyes in the darkness in the direction of her lover, wondering how he could possibly have such information.

"How did you know that, Ralph?" she whispered, and the detective was wild with her for asking the question, when he overheard her.

"I didn't know it, Marion. I only guessed that it would probably be his room, as it is the most likely one for an office." And at this reply, Sergeant Mostyn forgave Marion for having asked the question, while the girl was startled that Ralph could have gained so much knowledge of her father's secret life as to be aware that he had had an "office."

"I think you had better not come into the room at first, Miss Jannaway," said Mostyn, with more consideration for Marion's feelings than he had yet shewn. "Adams and I will make the search."

"I am not afraid, thank you, Mr. Mostyn," said Marion, bravely, "and I would rather go in with you."

"Just as you please. Adams, shew your lantern here."

The man flashed a bull's eye lantern on to the door and examined the fastenings. It was locked from the outside and the key still remained in the lock.

The sergeant turned it, and taking the lantern from the other man, opened the door and entered. Adams followed him closely, and Marion came after them.

Before she could enter the room, however, Mostyn uttered an exclamation and drew back.

"Miss Jannaway, you must prepare yourself for the worst," he said, quietly and respectfully. "There is

death in the room. Adams, go at once for a doctor, and then run to the station and tell the Inspector."

He flashed the light for a moment on Ralph's face as if by accident. It was white and drawn and terror-stricken.

In the meantime, Marion had rushed into the room and called eagerly to the detective to bring her a light that she might see her father.

CHAPTER VII

A SURPRISE AT THE BANK

At ten o'clock the next morning, Sergeant Mostyn was at Morris-place to see Marion. The latter had slept very little after the experiences of the previous night, and she looked, as she felt, weary, depressed, and forlorn.

The scene at Clergy-street, when it was discovered that Simeon Hoadley was dead, and had been murdered, had been very painful; and it was only after long and urgent entreaty that the girl had consented to leave the house at all. Inspector Martin and the doctor who had been called in, joined with Ralph to get her to leave, and she had yielded a reluctant consent. Probably she would have persisted in her refusal if the Inspector had not pointed out that she would aid the course of investigation into the mystery by leaving the place in the hands of the police.

The feeling of anger against the murderers and of keen anxiety to trace them out, became intense, and she was determined that no effort should be spared to effect the discovery. It was to be the purpose of her life, and to it she would devote every energy and power that she possessed.

"You keep up wonderfully, miss," said the detective, when she came into the room. He had been much impressed by the girl's courage on the previous night, and admired her accordingly. "Most young women would be quite knocked over by such an affair as this," he added.

"I am not altogether like other girls, perhaps, in some things," replied Marion; "but will you tell me the result of anything you may have discovered?"

"We made a search of the premises last night, so far as we could, and we shall continue to do it to-day."

"Yes; and what did you discover?"

"Very little indeed, so far, some might think. But we found what was probably the cause of the deed."

"Yes! What was that?" asked Marion, eagerly.

"Robbery. A good many places in the room have been disturbed; the safe has been opened and ransacked, and everything of value taken out of it. Every box or case of every kind in it has been opened and left open. The drawers in it have been opened also, and the contents taken away. There is an old bureau in the room, and that has also been forced, and every drawer turned inside out, and every paper pulled over and thoroughly ransacked; everything in it was in the greatest confusion. The drawers of the table have been served in the same way, and the papers in the book-shelves treated just in the same manner. Whatever was of the slightest value seems to have been taken away—if there was anything of value there—and only the rubbish left. Was there much in the house of value?" he asked, quickly, turning suddenly to Marion.

"I don't know. I cannot say for certain. I was never in the house until last night with you, and am absolutely ignorant of what may have been in it," answered Marion.

"Yes, that's what I thought—but still I hoped you might know, or be able to guess something."

"I have reason to think there may have been money and other valuable property there; but I cannot say for certain."

"What makes you think that?" asked the detective.

"The same reason that led me to think there had been foul play."

"Ah, you mean the papers that you found here," answered the detective, making a shot, and speaking in a rather off-hand manner.

But Marion was not to be caught.

"I have already told Mr. Martin that I shall be ready to explain my reasons if necessary," she answered quietly.

"You will be very ill-advised to keep anything back from us," said the man.

"I shall not do so," she replied. "I am more eager than you can be, that the whole truth shall be known. Indeed, I am determined," she said, very firmly.

"You have told us you suspect someone. Who is that?"

"I told you that there was someone whom my father suspected might do him an injury," answered Marion, correcting him. "It is a man named James Linnegan, who attempted to murder my father some five years ago, and was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. He threatened my father at the time of the trial and swore

that he would have his life. The man has recently been liberated, I understand, but why, I do not know."

"Do you know who Linnegan was, and what was his connection with your father?" asked the detective, making some notes in his pocket-book.

"Not in the least. Until within the last week or two, I had never heard his name. At the time of this trial, five years ago, I was still an inmate of Hemel Work Schools. About a fortnight before his death, my father mentioned the name of James Linnegan to me, telling me he was an old enemy; and he expressed himself in such terms of rage and fear of the man, that I thought he was ill. That is the man he suspected."

"What other associates of your father do you know of?"

"None," replied Marion. "I know nothing whatever. I thought always that he was what he told me, a working silversmith and jeweler, who found it impossible to get work."

"You do not know whether or not he was reported to have money? You see, if the motive—as we think—is robbery, it is very material for us to know who would be likely to have such knowledge of his wealth as would lead to an attempt to rob him."

"I have not the slightest idea," said Marion.

"I am sorry for that," said the detective, as he rose to go," it is much more difficult to work under the circumstances. By-the-way," he said, turning as he reached the door, "do you think your friend—Mr. Gething, I think you said the name was—do you think he knows

anything more of your father's movements? He seemed to have some knowledge of the whereabouts of things at Clergy-street, last night?"

"No, I don't think he can possibly have any knowledge," answered Marion, readily. "What he said last night, was only the result of a guess."

"I see: I fancied very likely it was something of that sort, but I thought I had better ask. I suppose you have had notice of the inquest. It is to be opened at two this afternoon."

"I had not had notice, but I shall be there, of course," answered Marion; and with that Mr. Mostyn left.

As soon as he had gone, Marion prepared some breakfast and compelled herself to make a good meal, though she had no appetite or desire for food whatever.

Then she sat for a time thinking of all that she had still to do. She took out the paper which her father had left with her, and read it again, carefully.

Clearly, her first step should be, she thought, to go at once to the bank.

She recalled the occasion of her former visit, when her father had declared that he could get her some work from the manager of the bank, Mr. Fawcett. She had been struck at the time by the terms on which the two men appeared to be with one another. The conversation, indeed had been about little else than typewriting; except toward the close when the manager had asked her to sign her name in a large book which a clerk had brought in; but she had had no suspicion of what it all meant. Nothing more had been heard of the professed typewriting,

and Marion had concluded that the proposals had fallen through. She had brought away a very pleasant impression of the manager's courtesy, however.

She found him now even more genial and pleasant than before.

"Have you come about the typewriting, Miss Jannaway?" he asked with a smile, when she was shewn into his room, but checked himself when he saw how pale Marion looked. "I hope that nothing is the matter," he said, "and that you are in no trouble."

"I am in trouble, Mr. Fawcett, very sad and serious trouble."

"Pray tell me if I can be of any use to you, and if so, rely upon me," he answered, promptly and very kindly.

"I have brought you this letter," said Marion; handing to him the envelope addressed to him by her father.

He took it and read it in silence.

"Do you know the contents of this?" he asked, when he had finished.

"No," replied Marion.

"Mr. Hoadley tells me here what I knew from him before, that you are Miss Jannaway; and adds what I did not know, that you are related to him and he wishes me to explain fully the reason of your former visit to the bank, and your signature in our books. Do you not yet know what that all meant?"

"No, Mr. Fawcett, not as yet."

"Then I will tell you. Mr. Hoadley placed one sum of £500 on deposit here in your name; and a further sum of £500 on the current account. We are, of course, prepared to honor your checks up to that amount."

"Wait one moment, please," exclaimed Marion. "You take my breath away with surprise. Do you mean that I have a thousand pounds in the bank."

"Yes, that is precisely my meaning," replied Mr. Fawcett.

"I had not the faintest idea of this," said the girl. "If I ask you for a hundred pounds now, this instant, would you give it me?" This was the practical shape which the matter took with her.

"Certainly," replied the bank manager, "provided, of course, that you draw a check for that amount."

"I am astonished," said Marion; then, after a pause, she added, "I had no idea my father had anything like such an amount of money in his possession."

"I beg your pardon, did you say your father?" asked Mr. Fawcett, surprised in his turn. "Is Mr. Hoadley your father?"

"He *was* my father, Mr. Fawcett. He is dead," answered Marion, sadly.

"Dead," exclaimed Mr. Fawcett. "When? How? I have not heard of it!"

"He has been murdered," said Marion; and she then told him the circumstances of the discovery of the murder, of the double life which her father had lived, and how she found it out through the packet which had been left in her charge.

"It is terrible for you—very terrible and distressing," he said, kindly, when Marion had finished her story. He sympathised deeply with her, and made his sympathy apparent. "Whatever I can do for you, I will do with the greatest readiness. Would you like to see the papers

now which we have here?" he asked; and sent for them when she assented.

"These are the deeds of the two houses," he said, opening the deed box which a clerk brought to them. "Here is the will; and there, I see, is a letter addressed to you."

Marion opened it, and found in it the deposit note for £500, with a short letter from Simeon Hoadley, saying that it belonged to her. After the old man's signature a postcript was added—

"You will now be free from any necessity to use your typewriter for a living; but never forget to resort to it in any difficulty."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Fawcett, "that there is something wanting which was to have been added. When Mr. Hoadley placed the will in my charge, he told me generally what its provisions were, and that everything he had was to be yours. He said he would make a list of all his possessions, and bring it to me to be placed with the will; but he has never done so. I see by the paper you showed me that he refers to a list said to be with the will; but I have no such list, and have never had one. The only paper with the will is this rather dirty and thumbed piece of foolscap, with a number of figures and fractions and scratches on it which are meaningless. I should suppose it has found its way here by mistake or oversight on the part of Mr. Hoadley. I am afraid that the absence of the list may prove rather embarrassing."

"Do you know anything of my father's means, or what property he had, Mr. Fawcett?" asked Marion, taking the paper he mentioned, and looking at it curiously.

"Little or nothing. He was a close man in regard to his affairs. He kept little or no balance of money here, and rarely spoke to me on business matters. Indeed, until he came to me a little more than a fortnight ago, in reference to the arrangement about yourself and brought the deeds of the houses and the money for your account, I had no idea that he possessed anything like such a sum."

"This is a very curious paper," said Marion, who had been scrutinising it closely. "Very curious. Did not my father say anything as to its meaning?"

"Not a word," replied Mr. Fawcett; "in fact, he never mentioned it. It was in the will when he opened it, as we were talking together, but he made no reference to it whatever."

"Yet one would scarcely think that he left it here in the will by chance, especially as he must have known it was here through opening the will before you. If he had not meant to leave it, or if it had been folded up by mistake, he would have noticed it then and taken it away."

"One would think so," replied the manager. "But your father was evidently a strange man who did strange acts sometimes."

"Can I take the papers away with me?" asked Marion.

"Certainly," replied the manager. "All I require is your receipt for them. You may like to examine them at leisure. May I ask whether you have made any arrangements for concluding the legal formalities?"

"Legal formalities? I am afraid I do not even know what they are. Can you get them done for me?"

"You will want the will proved, and for this you will want a lawyer. Do you know of anyone? If not,

I will, if you like, give you a letter to my own solicitors, shrewd, prompt men, who will do all that you wish."

While Mr. Fawcett was writing the letter, Marion sat and scrutinised again the paper of signs and figures, which had been with the will; but she could make nothing at all of it.

"I think you will be wise," said Mr. Fawcett, as he handed her the letter of introduction to his solicitors, "to leave the deeds here with us, and to take the will at once to Messrs. Price."

"And what of this paper?" asked Marion, holding up the sheet of foolscap.

"I do not think that is of any use," replied Mr. Fawcett, "but I should not destroy it."

Marion thanked him very cordially for all he had done, and left.

It was nearly one o'clock, and as there was more than an hour before the inquest, she resolved to go at once to the solicitors. She had a long consultation with them, and they promised to make such arrangements as were necessary, and advised her to let them represent her at the inquest. She saw the desirability of this, and the junior partner went with her in a cab to the place where the inquest was to be held.

A consultation with the police followed, and then it was arranged that nothing should be done that day beyond the formal identification of the murdered man.

Marion's evidence was sufficient for this, and when the proceedings were over, the lawyer who took a great interest in the case and in his client, made arrangements

for the funeral, and thus relieved Marion of a load of trouble and worry.

As soon as he had done that, he told Marion that the police wished to see her particularly, and asked her to go with him to the station, as certain matters had to be cleared up at once. He said he had better be present, as he understood some questions affecting the girl closely were to be put, and that he would advise her whether or not they should be answered.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMINED BY THE POLICE

WHEN they reached the police-station they were shown at once into the Inspector's room, and found him there, Sergeant Mostyn being with him.

The Inspector was much more formal in his manner than he had yet been.

"In what capacity are you here, Mr. Price?" he asked.

"As Miss Jannaway's legal adviser, of course. She has placed herself unreservedly in my hands," replied the lawyer, promptly.

"It is my duty to inform you, Miss Jannaway, or Hoadley—whichever name you prefer to take," said Inspector Martin, "that I am going to ask you certain questions. You need not answer them, of course, unless you please; but if you do answer them, what you say will be taken down, and may be used against you."

"Miss Jannaway has nothing whatever to conceal, and no cause whatever for not saying everything that she knows," returned Mr. Price.

"We shall see about that directly," answered the Inspector, shortly. "She has concealed something up to the present."

"I have said throughout," replied Marion, calmly, but feeling rather nervous at the other's manner, "that when-

ever it might be necessary for me to state the only matter which I have not stated, I would do so."

"When did you say you first missed your father?"

"The night before last—Tuesday night. He should have been home, at Morris-place, by about eight or nine o'clock, when I reached home, and he did not come home at all."

"When did you see him last alive?"

"On Tuesday morning. I left him to go to my work at about the usual time, between half-past eight and nine o'clock."

"Was he then in his usual health?"

"Yes; except that he seemed more depressed and low-spirited than usual. He had, I believe, a presentiment something would happen to him."

"And you reached Morris-place at what time that evening?"

"A little before nine o'clock."

"Will you please tell me carefully all that you did that day, and all the persons you saw and spoke to?" asked the Inspector.

"Certainly; to the best of my recollection. I went straight to the office where I have been at work for four years. Mrs. Gunthrey's in Southampton Buildings, Holborn. I stayed at my work until one o'clock, when I went out for my lunch for about half-an-hour. Then I returned, and continued at my work until about a quarter or twenty minutes past six. Six o'clock is the time I generally leave the office. I then took an omnibus to King's Cross, and walked up the Pentonville-road as far as the Angel, at Islington. I arrived there as nearly as

possible, at seven o'clock; I had an appointment there. I waited until eight o'clock, when the gentleman I was to meet came, just as I was getting into a tram-car to go home; and we walked together home to Morris-place. I reached there about nine o'clock."

"With whom was your appointment?"

"With Mr. Ralph Gething, the gentleman to whom I am engaged to be married," answered Marion, with a slight blush.

"Do you usually go home that way?"

"Very frequently. Mr. Gething and I often meet to walk home together. He is in the City, in the office of Messrs. Quilter and Robinson, solicitors, of Moorgate-street, and generally leaves in time to admit of our meeting at the Angel."

"Then you were alone from a quarter-past six until eight o'clock on Tuesday evening?"

"No, not alone all the time. A young lady who works in the office with me came as far as King's Cross with me, and we parted by the Metropolitan Station, at about twenty minutes, or a quarter to seven," replied Marion.

"Then, from that time you were quite alone until you met Mr. Gething at eight o'clock by the Angel?"

"Yes," answered Marion.

"Did anyone see you when you reached Morris-place?"

"I cannot say for certain. I think not; but I am not quite sure whether one of the lodgers in the house was not in the passage when I opened the door."

"Now, then, will you tell me how you passed the time until the discovery of the crime?"

"I spent a very anxious night on Tuesday, and did not

go to bed. My father had never been out before in such a way, and I was very apprehensive that something had happened. In the morning I went to the office at about the usual time. I should not have gone at all, but there was a special press of work and I knew I could not be spared. I worked until about three or four o'clock and then returned home, hoping that my father would be there; or that he would have sent word. But there was no news of him, and I was made more anxious than ever. I felt that I ought to take some steps to find him, but I did not know what to do. I then went to Mr. Gething's house and asked that he should come to me as soon as possible; and I wired to his office to the same effect. In reply, he telegraphed saying he would be detained at his office until nine o'clock, and I then determined to communicate with the police."

"But instead of doing that in the first instance, you went to the house in Clergy-street. Why did you not go there, or send there, before?"

"Up to the moment of my starting for Clergy-street, I had no knowledge that my father ever went there."

"Why then, did you go there?"

Marion hesitated, and looked to Mr. Price.

"Had I better mention the reason?" she asked.

"Yes, decidedly, considering the form which the Inspector's questions have taken. I am much surprised," replied the lawyer.

The girl then told the Inspector everything connected with the packet left in her charge by her father, and showed him the papers, which he read carefully.

"You had this packet in your keeping during the

whole of Tuesday night, and Wednesday, and yet did not think of it?"

"Yes. My father gave it to me for the first time one morning, about a fortnight ago, with the strictest injunctions not to open it unless at any time he was missing. He used to ask for it every evening, as soon as we met, and he gave it to me every morning when I went out."

"Are you quite sure that you knew nothing of the contents of this paper before Wednesday evening?" the Inspector asked, looking very sternly at her.

"Quite certain," replied Marion. "Had I known, I should have gone at once to Clergy-street."

"How came you to remember the packet at the time you did?"

"I was putting on my jacket to go to the police, when I thought of it suddenly. I carried it in my jacket pocket."

"But you had put on your jacket before, in the morning, had you not?" How came it that you did not think of it?" he asked, suspiciously.

"I cannot tell you. What I have told you is the exact truth," answered Marion.

"This paper was the first intimation you had ever had that your father was not a poor man, I think?"

"Yes."

"And that information he did not wish you to have until after his death?"

"He told me not to open the packet unless he was missing, and I did not do so," replied Marion, firmly.

"Now, can you tell me of any person who had so strong an interest in your father's death as yourself?"

"I had no interest in my dear father's death," said Marion, with much indignation. "I worked for him cheerfully for years, and would have continued to do so with the greatest willingness. Only on the Tuesday morning, I had told him that I had good news for him; that I thought I could see my way to double my income by starting in business on my own account, and that there would be no need for him to even try to work any more."

"I don't wish to hurt your feelings by my questions," answered the Inspector. "Do not misunderstand me. Do you know of anyone else who could possibly have had the information as to your father's means, which this paper gave to you?"

"No, I do not. I know absolutely nothing of his life or business, or occupation, or associates at Clergy-street. The whole revelation was a complete surprise to me last night, when I opened the packet and read that paper."

"Why did you not mention this paper to me last night?"

"I did not think it was necessary; but I said I should be prepared to do so, if it became necessary. My reason was that I did not wish to have to speak of my father's relations with me."

"His relations with you—what were they?"

"I mean," answered Marion, flushing a little, "I did not wish that people should know how he had concealed from me the fact of his having money, while leaving me to support him. That is all!"

"Have you found out anything more concerning your father's means?"

"I have seen Mr. Fawcett, this morning, at the bank, and have received from him the will which I have given to Mr. Price;" and then Marion detailed the circumstances of her interview with the bank manager, and spoke of the missing list of Simeon Hoadley's possessions.

After she had finished, the Inspector and the detective consulted together in low tones, and the former said to her:

"Thank you; that is all I wish to ask you at present."

"But, if you please, I should like to know whether any discoveries have been made at Clergy-street."

"I am afraid I cannot answer your question," returned the Inspector.

"Why not?" pressed Marion.

"I cannot give you my reasons."

"That seems to me very extraordinary indeed. I am determined that the mystery shall be discovered, am prepared to make any sacrifice to help the discovery; am ready to spend every farthing of money I possess or can get in order to help; it is a task especially committed to me by my father, and yet you—the police—will not give me the slightest assistance. Very well," she said, very resolutely, as she rose from her chair, "I cannot force you, of course; but I shall go to headquarters, and if I cannot get assistance there, I will offer a reward and commence an investigation on my own account."

The Inspector bowed, but made no reply.

"Do I really understand you, Mr. Inspector," said Mr. Price, intervening, "that you positively decline to give us any information. I have not interfered during the long series of questions you have put to Miss Jannaway,

but I must tell you now, that I listened in amazement. You have cross-examined this lady in a manner that has profoundly astonished me, and in a way that entirely exceeded your rights. Every question put to her, however, has been promptly and fully answered, and yet at the end you do her the flagrant injustice of refusing to help her in the task which, as the only representative of the dead man, she is called upon to fulfil. So far as I am concerned, the matter shall certainly not pass without some further action."

"You are at liberty to take what course you please, Mr. Price, as Miss Jannaway's legal representative," replied the Inspector, calmly; "I am acting as I think best in the case."

"Well, there are one or two questions which I will put to you, and you can, if you please, refuse to answer them. If you cannot see your way to answer them, then, of course, as Miss Jannaway has said, we must make inquiries on our own account. In the first place, have you been able to find out anything as to the persons who may have lived in this house, 50 Clergy-street, with Simeon Hoadley?"

"I will answer that question," answered the Inspector, after a pause. He felt that he had taken up a wrong position, and was rather glad of an opportunity of retreating from it. "There has been a woman caretaker living in the house, named Mrs. Bloxam; but she has been away for about a week or more. We have found that out from the neighbors."

"Do you know anything of the people who visited the house at any time—visited Hoadley, I mean?"

"I can answer that only in very general terms. Hoadley was in the habit of dealing with a number of very bad characters—many of them known to the police—and these used to visit him from time to time, and sell him property of different kinds?"

"Do you mean stolen property?" asked Mr. Price.

"I do not say stolen property," returned the Inspector. "None has ever been traced to Hoadley's possession, or found in it. But he was not particular where property which he bought came from."

"Ah, I see! Then as to this man, James Linnegan; do you know anything of him?"

"He was, as you know, a convict, and was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude for attempting to murder Simeon Hoadley, by shooting at him at 50 Clergy-street. He was liberated a few weeks ago, with a free pardon, for saving the life of a warder, at Dartmoor, when the convicts attempted to escape. He has not been seen by the police since. He is a man of about middle height, but very sinewy and muscular; hair rather dark, but now tinged with grey, and cut short; no moustache or whiskers on his face; rather sullen, and somewhat heavy features; a heavy chin, which protrudes somewhat; is generally pale in complexion; and his eyes are rather small, and greyish-brown in color. You could see his photograph at headquarters."

"Have you formed any theory to account for the crime?"

"That I cannot answer," replied the Inspector.

"Do you think it is a case in which a reward should be offered?" asked Mr. Price.

"That is a matter on which I am not prepared at present to give an opinion."

This reply ended the interview, and Marion and the lawyer left the Police-station.

Marion shook hands with Mr. Price very cordially, and thanked him for all he had done, and promised to call at his office on the following day, as he requested.

"We will then see what is best to be done, Miss Jannaway. In the meantime, try to be as easy in mind and to think as little of this terrible affair as possible."

"I cannot help thinking about it," she answered, sadly. "I shall never cease to do so until we have found the clue to it; and that I am determined to do."

"What fools the police can be sometimes," said the lawyer to himself, as he sat in his cab on the way back to his office. "Fancy their suspecting that girl! I wonder if they mean to arrest her."

CHAPTER IX

RALPH COUNSELS INACTION

AFTER leaving Mr. Price, Marion hurried to the office in Southampton Buildings in order to explain her absence that day, and to arrange for not attending for some time to come. She had also to announce her determination not to carry any further at present, the negotiations for starting a business on her own account.

Then she returned to Morris-place, as Ralph was to call there as soon as he could get free from the office.

On her way back from Holborn, she reflected carefully upon all that had passed in the interview with the Police Inspector that afternoon, and gradually, one thought stood out in her mind with great distinctness. It was that the Inspector had asked no questions about Ralph Gething.

The more she turned this over and looked at it from different points of view, the more strange did it seem to her. She remembered that the detective had asked her about him in the morning. Then she began to wonder whether this refusal of the police to tell her the result of their discoveries had any sort of connection with Ralph?

Why would they not tell her? She never thought for a moment that they would suspect her; but she tried to find some reason for the course they had taken; and she ran over everything that seemed to have any bearing upon the matter, or to point to any suggestion of a reason.

The Inspector had apparently attached a good deal of importance to the fact that she had been waiting at the Angel, which was, of course, near to Clergy-street, for an hour, on the night of the murder. He had asked a good many questions about that: but when she had said that Ralph was late, and had come to meet her there, he had asked nothing about him. Yet the detective, who was sure to have spoken to the Inspector on the subject, had evidently been struck by the apparent knowledge of the premises in Clergy-street which Ralph had displayed when they were in the house.

Had Ralph really known anything about the house, and about her father being there? She recalled his manner in the house, his seeming confusion, the exclamation he had let fall; and lastly, the way he had hurried up to her on Tuesday night, coming from the direction of Clergy-street.

He may have known of her father's connection with the place.

Then a thought flashed upon her which startled her.

Could the police be so idiotic as to suspect that Ralph had had a hand in the crime? If so, was the omission to question her about him intentional—intentional lest they feared to put her on her guard thinking she would communicate with him?

Then she recalled the questions put to her as to when she had known the contents of the packet, and whether anyone else knew them. That meant Ralph, she thought.

In this way, Marion came gradually, but not very clearly, to the view that the theory of the police was that, whoever had been concerned in the crime had gained

their knowledge of her father's connection with Clergy-street from herself; that Ralph Gething could be the only person likely to do that; and that therefore he was to be suspected.

As to the suspicions being anything more than the veriest nonsense, Marion did not for a moment doubt. They might just as well have suspected her of the crime as Ralph. But she had heard of the way in which a wrong theory will often prevent the real culprit being followed and caught; and she was therefore irritated as well as distressed, that such a weak and foolish notion should be seriously entertained for an instant.

She felt, moreover, that it would be best to clear this cobweb away as speedily as possible, and determined that Ralph had better make a full explanation of everything without a moment's delay, and that she would speak to him about it as soon as they met.

After she had had something to eat, she took out the paper which had been left with her father's will, and examined it closely.

It was a most singular looking composition. It filled more than a foolscap sheet of paper, and seemed utterly unintelligible.

The first two lines were as follows:—

† " 1 ¢ 9 339] 80½ 6 " 2 † " 3⅛ 6 " † 82 [36 " ' 9 ¢ 1¼] 463 † " 150 † 8906 £80 1¼] 833 8 " 6 * 7 " 8 £ £80633⅜ 926 [' 1 † " 2 £36 † " ¢ 46 " 8' [⅛ 9015

And there were some forty to fifty lines of the same figures.

So far as the girl could judge there was no meaning to it at all. Yet she was unwilling to think that her father would write such a paper without having some reason for doing so, and would leave it in such a place as the bank, unless it had some signification. But it seemed quite incomprehensible.

She had been poring over it for nearly an hour when Ralph arrived.

Marion was delighted to see him, and ran to him, and kissed him, and clung to him, and showed much more of her love for him than she usually displayed. She rallied him on his looking so pale and worried, chided him playfully for not having come sooner to her, and made so much of him, that the man himself was surprised.

The lonely feeling which had come over Marion owing to her father's death, and the surprise and grief she had endured during the last two days, combined with the very unusual and exciting experiences through which she had passed, had enhanced in her eyes the value of the calm soothing quietude of their love. Ralph was now the only being in the world whom she had to love.

"I am so glad you have come, Ralph," she said, after a time, "there is so much to tell you, and so much to explain, and so much to talk about, that I scarcely know where to begin. But tell me first, dear, how is it, you are looking so harassed and pale. Aren't you well?"

"Yes, I'm well enough, Marion in body; but I've been a good deal bothered in mind, and the work has been worrying; and then, of course, I have been fretting about not being able to get to you in all your trouble." His manner was very gentle and affectionate.

She slipped her arm through his, as they sat side by side at the table, and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Ah, Ralph, I have missed you. You can't think what a comfort it is to have you by me. I feel, somehow, when I am with you as if I need not worry myself about how matters go, but that whatever happens, you will manage everything, as it should be managed; and everything will end as it ought to end, and be happy ever afterwards," and she smiled into his face.

"Well, child, I'm glad I can make somebody feel comfortable, for I can't always do it for myself. I think sometimes I am a rare hand at making a general bungle of matters," he answered, almost with a sigh, as he bent down and kissed her.

"Are you low spirited, Ralph?" asked the girl.

"Not exactly low spirited, Marion, but yet in not what I should call properly good form," he answered, with a rather forced cheerfulness.

"I am sorry, dear. Have you any trouble or worry you would like to tell me?" she asked, very sympathetically.

"No, Marion, no; there is nothing I can tell you," he said, quickly.

"Because I am quite ready to take charge of your bothers, as I expect you to take charge of mine," she said, cheeringly. "Though I am glad to feel dependent upon others sometimes, as I was saying just now, I am not always so. When I am alone and have to face all these troubles and anxieties connected with my poor father's death I am a very different person. I wonder how it is that when there is a lot to be done one just make a big effort and does it, and when it is over just drops back into

the usual routine. But whenever there is a task to be done, a difficulty to be beaten, I feel some kind of power within me, that seems to lift me right over it, and push me through it. And then I come to you, and feel as if you could have done, or could do it all much better than I. Do you ever feel like that, Ralph? But there, of course, you don't. Men are not such weak creatures as we women," and she smiled to him and at herself as she said this.

"Turning philosopher, Marion, are you?" he said, more lightly than he had yet spoken. "But now, tell me something of what has happened to-day?"

She told him the purport of all; the call of the detective in the morning; her visit to the bank and all that had happened; the short proceedings at the inquest; the interview with the lawyer; her long questioning by the police; the arrangements she had made in the city to be absent from the office; and her return and puzzled scrutiny of the mysterious figures and marks.

Ralph Gething listened with deep and almost painful interest to all the girl had said; interposing now and then to ask a question on some point which was not quite clear. When she had finished her recital, he was very thoughtful and silent.

'Were there any other papers at the bank, Marion, besides the deeds of the houses, the will and this one?" he asked, laying his hand on the sheet of foolscap.

"No, Ralph, none. The list of my father's property is missing," said Marion.

"Unless this is it," answered Ralph Gething, quietly, pointing to the paper as he spoke.

"I am glad to hear you say that," replied Marion. "I have wondered also, whether this could be the list. But I have not said anything to anyone about my idea. I wished to try and discover it for myself. It is a grief to me that my poor father mistrusted me so much as to hide from me completely all his life and doings at Clergy-street. I wish we could find out something more of that part of his life."

"Yes; it was all very mysterious," answered Ralph, slightly ill at ease. "From all I could gather it must have been a curious life."

"How much do you know about it all, Ralph?" said Marion, very quickly. "Did you know anything of his being at Clergy-street, before it came out like this?"

"Well, in a way, I must say, yes, Marion," answered Ralph, hesitating and not meeting her glance. "I ought to have told you, but I, somehow, wasn't sure about everything, and—and waited. You know he didn't like me, and I couldn't understand why; but I suppose there was a reason, in fact, I think there was; but I didn't want to appear to be setting you against him, and so I—I didn't speak." His confused, hesitating manner made the girl more uncomfortable than his words.

"I wish you would tell me everything you know," she said, calmly, in a rather low tone. "It might help us both now."

He glanced hurriedly at her before he answered.

"Did he never tell you that I was the means of saving him from some unpleasantness at the hand of a drunken man, one evening, close to Clergy-street. He was as angry with me as he had been with the man who was

going to assault him. I think it was because the man in a string of violent language dropped something about Clergy-street, and your father's occupation and so on. I didn't pay much heed to what was said, but it gave me an idea there was some kind of secret in his life that you did not know."

"Didn't you find out anything more?" asked Marion.

"No, no," he replied, slowly. "I made an inquiry or two, but nothing much. I did find out that he went to the house in Clergy-street."

"When was all this, Ralph? I am sorry you did not tell me."

"Quite recently, dear, only a few days ago. I should have told you, soon," he answered. He was cooler and more collected now.

"Had you come from Clergy-street when you met me on Tuesday?" asked Marion, her voice trembling very slightly as she put the important question. It made the man start.

"No, Marion, no," he answered, quickly—so quickly, as to make it evident that the question had discomposed him.

"Would you mind telling me where you came from on Tuesday?"

"Why do you ask me such questions?" he replied, irritably and almost angrily. "I don't understand your meaning at all. One would think you suspected me of—of keeping back all sorts of things from you. I have nothing to keep back."

"Ralph, dear, don't say such things. You pain and hurt me. I wouldn't think such a thing of you for the

whole wide world. I'll tell you quite plainly and simply why I ask you. I trust you, my dear, as I trust myself," said Marion, kissing him. "Listen dear," she continued, as she took his hand and pressed it fondly in hers. "These police people are by no means the wisest of men, and what they want is that all of us, who knew my father, should be able to explain clearly and readily all that we did from the time he left here until the time he was found by us, dead. Particularly is this the case with those who knew of his being at Clergy-street. I have had to do this, and they will ask you, I expect. It is very ridiculous, especially when the real criminal is as good as known; this man, James Linnegan. Now, do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, Marion, I—I think I follow you now;" he spoke without looking at her and without lifting his head, which was bent down on his arm.

"Well, then, dear, what this all amounts to is that these stupid men want to know how it is that you seemed to know something of the inside of the house at Clergy-street; that you were late in coming to me on Tuesday night, and came from the direction of Clergy-street; and were in the neighborhood of the street last night, when the detective and I met you." The girl spoke with much reluctance, but she felt that she was doing what she ought to do in Ralph's interests by putting the matter in such a way to him. Her tone was very tender, and her manner quite caressing in its gentle solicitude.

Ralph Gething did not answer for a long while, and the silence was very hard for Marion to bear.

"It is, as you say, Marion, most preposterous that

anyone should dream of putting such questions," he said, in a manner that seemed quite uneasy, "and I should not think of answering them. Of course, I could do so if it were necessary; but it is not necessary, and I shall certainly decline to let anyone question me." He looked up now and he was almost defiant in his manner; but his face was pale, and his hand trembled a little.

"Very well, dear," answered the girl, trustfully. "I shall be the last to press you, you may be sure. The chief reason why I should have liked you to explain this is that the police may not waste their time in finding answers to such stupid questions."

"They will not do that; they would never do anything so foolish." He attempted to feel confident, but he was very unsuccessful.

"I hope not," she answered, "but thus far I have not found them acting very wisely. The only result will be, as Mr. Price and I agreed, that we must make an investigation on our own account. But now," she said, without heeding the nervous start which the man gave at her words. "I want you to look at this paper of curious figures and signs, and see if you can make anything of it;" and she opened it on the table in front of them.

They both examined it together for some time without speaking, and then began to make a few comments, agreeing that there must be some meaning to it all.

While they were thus engaged, a rather heavy footstep came hurriedly up the staircase, someone knocked at the door, and opened it when Marion replied, and Sergeant Mostyn entered.

He stood holding the door handle, and looking at

Ralph and Marion as they sat together with the paper in front of them, and hesitated a moment before he spoke. Then he apologised for disturbing them at so late an hour, but explained that he thought Marion would like to know the latest results of the investigation.

"Then you have decided to keep me informed of matters?" asked Marion. "I'm glad of that."

"Well, you see, it's in this way, Miss Jannaway. I don't call this an official visit," answered the detective, "in fact I didn't tell Mr. Martin that I was exactly coming to you; but I thought you would like to know."

"Yes, of course. What have you found out? Have you found James Linnegan," she asked, eagerly.

"No, we haven't done that yet; but we have now found without doubt the motive of the crime; and that there was some valuable property on the premises. A further search has resulted in our finding what was, no doubt, a place used for hiding money. One or two coins, a sovereign and a half sovereign, were in it when we found it, and these were, no doubt, left behind by the thief from hurry, or some such cause."

"Is that all," answered Marion, with a gesture of disappointment. "But we knew that that was the motive."

The detective made some general answer to this, intended to emphasise the importance of the discovery, and then, after some general conversation about the matter, dropped in some questions, addressed partly to Marion and partly to Ralph, on the subject of Simeon Hoadley's habits and associates.

The questions were simple enough, and easily answered by both, and the detective rose to go.

"Are you not going to search for Linnegan, Mr. Mostyn?" asked Marion.

"Oh, yes, Miss Jannaway; of course we are. But it wouldn't do for us to act too hurriedly and make a mistake. We don't want ourselves to get away on to a wrong track," and with that he left.

"I wish it was as certain as he seems to think, that they will not get on to the wrong track," said Marion.

"What did he come here for now?" asked Ralph, quickly. "He didn't come to tell you what you knew before, pretending, too, that he was acting against instructions. It has some other meaning. It's like his cheek too, to come bouncing in here at such a time," he added, angrily. "But tell me, Marion, do you really intend, as you said before he came in, to carry on an investigation on your own account?"

"Yes, Ralph; I am determined to do that. My poor father has left me this money of his on that one condition."

"Yes, that may be; but it doesn't follow that you need take any action independently of the police. Surely it will be enough to let them do the work."

"I do not think so," answered Marion, quietly. "I think rather, that we shall do much more than they will; and I believe that Mr. Price is of my opinion."

"Oh, of course, he encourages you, because he knows he will get some fat things in costs. But I think differently. You won't do any good. I wish you'd give up the idea."

"Don't ask me to do that, Ralph," said the girl.

"But I do ask you. I don't like the idea of your running any such risks as you will have to run."

"I shan't run any risks, dear; I'm not going to do the work myself."

"But if you employ a lot of swindling, private detectives, you'll only pay your money for them to drink it up while they concoct a host of lies. I know them. I do really wish you would not take such a course."

"But I must do it."

"There's no must about it, Marion," replied Ralph Gething, rather crossly. "It's only a matter for you to decide as you prefer. There's no necessity."

"I feel that there is a necessity, Ralph. I have thought a great deal about it. My father left it to me as a duty to have this man Linnegan brought to justice."

"But you can't tell where this man is to be found, or what the finding of him may cost."

"No, I can't tell that; nor do I care. I am determined that he shall be found—aye, if I myself have to find him."

"Then, you don't care to do as I wish in the matter?" returned her lover. "I am rather hurt at that, Marion."

"Ralph, dear, don't say such unkind things. Of course, I care for all that you wish; and if you think this over, quietly, you will see that I am right. You grieve me, sadly, by such words."

"Not so much as you grieve me by persisting in doing what I know is not for your good, and can lead to nothing but harm. If I ask you not to do this, will you give way, Marion?" he said, taking her hand in his.

"I am sorry, Ralph, but you must not ask me. I cannot—cannot do what you want."

"Very well," he answered, half-angrily, half-dejectedly, "if you will have your way, you will. I have tried to per-

suade you for your good; and if harm comes of it, don't forget that I tried to warn you. I must go now, good-night," and they kissed and parted; Marion feeling very sad at her lover's conduct.

She was very thoughtful, after he had gone, and sat some time pondering over the strangely earnest way in which he had urged the request.

"Why is he so eager that I shall do nothing to unravel the mystery?" she asked herself, and she was rather frightened at the answer which her thoughts suggested out of the recollection of his refusal to tell her where he had been on the night of the murder.

CHAPTER X

EZRA GIBEON

MARION'S consultation with Mr. Price on the following day was a long and anxious one. She took with her a copy of the paper that had been left in the will, which she had made with great trouble and care, and left it with the lawyer for him to see if he could get it deciphered. He said he would try his hand on it himself at first, and if he failed, find out some expert and give him a portion of it.

"We had better not give the whole of it into any one's hands," he said cautiously, "as it may reveal some information which we had better keep to ourselves."

"I had not thought of that," answered Marion, "but you are right. Thus far, no one has seen it or knows of it, but Mr. Fawcett, yourself, Mr. Gething and I."

"What of Inspector Martin?" asked the lawyer.

"I did not tell him. It seemed to me that the paper could have nothing to do with the death of my poor father, and I thought we could tell the police about it at any time if it seemed necessary," answered Marion.

Mr. Price smiled at the prudence which Marion had shown.

"Well, I can't blame you for being cautious after the extraordinary proceedings at the police station yesterday," he said. "Have you heard anything more of the police?"

"Yes, the detective, Mr. Mostyn, called on me last night," and she told the circumstances of the visit.

"Did he see this cipher?" asked the lawyer.

"I don't know. It lay on the table; but he could hardly have read it, as he sat at some distance. Mr. Gething and I were trying at the moment to make something out of it."

"You weren't successful. Mr. Gething knew nothing about it, I suppose?" asked Mr. Price, thoughtfully, stroking his short beard as he spoke.

"No more than I myself," replied Marion.

"By-the-way, did Mr. Gething, after all, know anything of your father's association with Clergy-street?"

"Yes, he had a little information—but very little. He knew that my father went to the place."

"Pity he didn't tell you," answered the lawyer. "Might have saved a lot of trouble. Has he been able to tell you anything more about the place? You see, we ought to get as much information as possible about your father's movements and business, and the people he saw in Clergy-street. All we know, so far, is that he did business with some very shady people, and had some money of the existence of which not even his banker knew until within a day or two of his death. There may have been much more. It ought not to be difficult to find out all this. Can Mr. Gething tell us of no one who knew your father in business?"

"No, I don't think he can; but I have thought of someone whose name my father used to mention, although I do not know his address; his name is Ezra Gibeon, and my father used to speak of him as a man who employed him to repair jewelry, etc., in which he said Mr. Ezra dealt."

"If there is a dealer of that name, we shall find him out without difficulty. We will search in the directory. Here's the name, sure enough," he added, after a pause. "'Gibeon, Ezra, 31 Fulham-street, Aldersgate-street, E C.' There you are, Miss Jannaway, that's your man, I've no doubt."

"I'll go to him," said Marion, rising directly.

"You are very prompt, Miss Jannaway; but if you like I will go and see him."

"I would rather go myself. Can you give me any suggestions?"

"Only that you should try and get as much information as possible from Mr. Ezra about your father's movements. Anything he can tell you. Stay; yes, you might perhaps be able to get from him a description of some articles of value in your father's possession which might be traced if it has been taken away by the thieves."

No. 31 Fulham-street, Aldersgate, which Marion found without difficulty, was a small shop, with an old-fashioned, many-paned window that was anything but clean. The contents of the window were chiefly old books, old plate and old clothing, the rich gold and silver ornaments of which were tarnished by age and neglect; while in a corner, heaped together, was a quantity of jewelry—chains, rings, and trinkets—good, bad and indifferent in quality.

Marion stood looking at the miscellaneous collection in the window, thinking how she had best commence the inquiries she wished to make. Before she had been at the spot more than a couple of minutes a very dirty, keen-eyed, gray-haired Jew tapped at the window to her from inside the shop, and beckoned to her to enter.

Wondering whether the man could possibly know her she went in.

"I haf moch more of dose here, my tear," he said to the girl, "peautiful, peautiful. Just look at dese," and he took a box from a shelf behind him, and emptied the contents on to the counter. "Dey are all so cheap as nefer vos. Look at dis ring, and dis, and dis. You nefer see sech rings in your life pefore, nefer. Dey are vort tventy, fifty, hundert times vot I ask. See dis; here is a timont vich is vort fifty pounts if it is vort a penny; you haf it for dree pounts. Not timonts?" seeing that Marion made a sign of dissent. "Vell, den, look at dis emral. Dat vos sole me py a countess, I svear it py my peard. It is a peautiful stone, so large, so vine, so deep, so pure; it is a chewel vit vor a queen. Dat emral is vort—put dere, you know de vort of a chewel like dat, you see dat you are sharp and clefer, and qvick, and know vot you are doing. You know dat emral can't be pought for less dan vorty to sixty pount, and ven I say to you, you can haf it for fife pount, nay, for four pount, I am gifing it you, pecause you are not reech, but bretty, eh? You know dat, don't you?"

"Are you Mr. Ezra Gibeon?" asked Marion.

"Vell, vot a gel you are!" said the old Jew, lifting up his hands and assuming an expression of astonishment. "I show you dese lofely rings, dis timont unt dis emral—my pest I haf in my whole shop; peautiful, ratient, schplendid, enof to make any gel laugh for bleasure—unt you look at me qvietly unt ask 'are you Mr. Ezra Gipeon?' Dat is too moch." He had been gesticulating a great deal as he spoke, and he now looked as if disap-

pointed and grieved. "I nefer met a gel like dat. I ask 'Vot you puy,' you answer, 'Who are you?' I ton't onterstant dat."

"I am afraid I have not made the reason of my visit plain yet, but I will do so in a minute if you will tell me whether you are Mr. Ezra Gibeon?"

"Vot a gel it is!" cried the Jew, jerking his head back, and lifting his eyebrows, and throwing up his hands. "Vot a gel to pe sure, to dink noting ov de chewels and everyting ov me. I most be fery nice to outshine de timonts, de emrals, all de chewels. Ha, ha," and he rubbed his hands, and exclaimed again, "Vot a gel; I nefer did. Yes, my tear, I am Ezra Gipeon. And now, vot to you vant to puy? I vill serve you cheaper dan you ever know. I vill, I svear I vill, py all de saints in de Christian calentar, efen if I don't care a rab for de lot. You are a gel I like, a gel vot knows her mint, and sticks to her boint. A gel of a tousant; and I'd like to know dat some of my chewels vos on you, I vould, I take my oat' I vould. I gif you vat you vish sooner'n you not haf it." He spoke with such voluble energy, and with so much waving of arms and hands, and such noddings and shaking of the head that Marion could not get in a word until he stopped.

"Did you know Simeon Hoadley, Mr. Ezra?" she asked.

"Eh? Vot? Vot you mean?" said the Jew in reply, altering his whole manner instantly, and regarding the girl suspiciously out of his keen, scintillating, dark eyes, while he began to put back the contents of the box. All his elaborate action was put away for the moment, and

he answered in a rather sullen, guttural tone. "No, neber heart ov him! Who vos he? Excuse me, I'm pusy—haf to see a gent almost treckly. You're not a puyer, Goot tay," and he began to turn away as if he really had something calling for his notice.

"I mean the Simeon Hoadley whose death you must have seen in the papers yesterday," said Marion.

"I don't reat papers," answered the Jew. "Haf no time for dat—and no time to talk about tings oder'n pusiness. If he is tead—likely he is locky—he vont haf to do vot I haf to do, to vork hart for noding. Goot tay!"

"Are you sure you didn't know him, Mr. Ezra," continued Marion. "I have heard him mention your name."

"Vot a gel it is!" he cried again, this time in an angry tone. "Vot a gel to keep to a boint. Do you subbose I know efery vun vot knows my name. Vy do you come to me?" he asked, sharply and suddenly.

"I am Simeon Hoadley's daughter," replied Marion.

"Vot?" called out the Jew, in astonishment, "Vell, I nefer did, s'elp me!"

"It is true—I am Simeon Hoadley's daughter," repeated Marion, "and I have come to you because I thought you had been a friend to my father, and would be likely to help me."

The old Jew came back to his place at the counter, opposite to Marion, and leaning across, looked full into her face for a minute, very suspiciously, without speaking a word.

"I ton't know who you mean," he said, at length, shaking his head slowly from side to side, and glancing

cunningly at her from under his long gray lashes, "put if you like to ask any qvestions, I can't stop you; and if I know anyting ov vot you want, ov course, I'll tell you. P'raps den I might come to see who you mean?"

"I am in great trouble, Mr. Ezra," said Marion, "and I want to find out something of my father's business matters. I'll tell you why," and she told the Jew about the double life that her father had lived, and her own reasons for wanting the information.

The simple way in which she told her story produced a very favorable impression upon the Jew, and disarmed him of much of his suspicion. But he had had many transactions with Simeon Hoadley, and he was most unwilling that they should become known. Ezra Gibeon was scarcely more particular in his dealings than Simeon himself had been, and he had no intention of giving such information as would bring him in contact with the police; and his hesitation and suspicion had been caused by his fear that Marion might be a spy, acting with the police.

"Vell, my tear," he said, at the close, "and vot qvestions do you vish to ask me?"

"In the first place, can you tell me anything about any of the people with whom my father used to do business?" asked Marion.

"Vot a gel it is, to pe sure; I nefer tid know such a gel. To dink I know her old fader's pusiness—old Simeon Hoatley's pusiness, too, of all men. No, my tear, I can't tell you. All I know is dat he vould to pusiness mit anybody who had to sell vot your father vos open to puy," and the Jew raised his hands and eyebrows and shoulders together to emphasize his ignorance.

"And what did he chiefly buy, Mr. Ezra?" asked Marion.

"My tear, how can I know dat? I nefer see sech a gel in my life—I nefer did. I know he puy lots of chewels —lots. He haf pought dem ov me; he deal in dem, you onterstant."

"Yes," said Marion, quietly, making a guess. "I believe he bought such things. He has shown me some that he bought from you."

"Vrom me!—vrom me!" ejaculated the Jew, in rather a shrill tone. "He scarcely trade mit me at all—a vew small dings of leedle vort."

"Could you describe to me anything he ever purchased from you?"

"Yes, I dink I could; I should know dem agen—quite certain, if I see dem, because he puy so leetle.

"He once showed me a curious seal—a white ivory snake coiled round the gold figure of a boy, the impression of the seal being the same design as the seal itself, and he told me that it was yours, and that you had given it to him to repair. Did you sell him that?—and would you know it again?"

Mr. Ezra Gibeon paused some time before answering, and seemed to be making an effort to recall the seal to his memory; but he remembered it quite well, and was considering the best answer to return to the question.

'Yes, I dink I remember it, and I should know it agen. I pought dat seal at an auction room in the Easd End, vere it vos send vrom a bawnshop. I remember it. Oh, yes, I vould know dat seal agen. You are right—your fader pought it," and he added a number of circumstances

connected with the history of how the seal came into his possession, speaking very fast, and gesticulating freely all the while.

"Do you remember any other such things?"

"No; can't remember any oder," said the Jew, shaking his head, reflectively, and pulling his scanty beard.

"Did you sell him a small fish-shaped pencil case?" and Marion described the ornament which her father had more than once shown her.

"No, no, I nefer see dat," answered the Jew, emphatically.

"There is one other question I should like to ask you, Mr. Ezra," said Marion. "Was my father a rich man?"

"Reech, my tear—reech?" cried the Jew, with a soft, sly, indescribable laugh, rolling his eyes in their sockets, and puffing up his cheeks and shaking his body as the laugh progressed. "Reech? Vot a gel it is; I nefer tid. Vy do you ask *me* dat?"

"Because in a paper to me he says so; and yet there is nothing more to be found than a thousand pounds at the bank, placed there in my name, and the deeds of two houses," answered Marion, straightforwardly. "If he had anything more there is no trace of it."

The Jew listened intently while she spoke, still letting his body shake as if the laugh were dying away out of his limbs. When she stopped he laughed again.

"Is dat all? A tousant pount. Is dat not enofe? I vish I had a tousant pount," and he lifted his eyes and hands as if in ecstatic contemplation of such bliss.

"I am not grumbling, Mr. Ezra. To me a thousand pounds is a great sum indeed. But I thought there was

more, and was not willing that those who had killed him should secure the money after all."

The old Jew looked at her cunningly.

"Vot a gel it is. But a good gel, a good gel? See I tell you someding. Haf you vount no chewels, my tear?"

"No, Mr. Ezra, not one."

"Not one. Got pless my heart. Your fader haf some of de most peautiful chewels in de vorlt—most peautiful. Dey are vort tousants and tousants. Timonts unt emralts. He haf lots," and the Jew stretched out his arms to their widest extent to emphasise his meaning. "Lots, I say. Reech?" Then with the same sly smile, "he was fery, fery reech. He lofe chewels and haf lots of dem. Vhere are dey? He haf lot ov money. Vhere is it? You most vind it, my tear. Vot a gel it is; a fine gel, a goot gel. Unt, now, go avay. I have moch to do." He held out his hand, and Marion shook it. "A goot gel," he said, as he held her hand, "if you vant me agen come to me. I like you; but vind de money, and de chewels; don't forget de chewels, my tear, don't forget de chewels."

CHAPTER XI

MRS. BLOXAM

THE next two or three days passed without any fresh steps being taken by the police, or further discoveries of importance being made. The funeral took place on the day after Marion had seen Ezra Gibeon, and the girl felt very down-hearted and lonely. To add to her sorrow, Ralph Gething appeared much changed in his manner; he was fretful, impatient, often irritable, and generally gloomy.

Marion's anxiety, that some further progress with the search for her father's murderers should be made, increased, and the apparent inability to discover anything galled and worried her greatly.

The result of the interview with the old Jew was disappointing, as Mr. Price pointed out when Marion told him what had passed. All that it did was to strengthen their opinion that there was money somewhere, if they could only find it; and to afford what might be a clue—in the description of the seal—if it could be followed up. A very minute description of the seal was therefore given to the police.

Mr. Price confessed himself completely baffled by the cipher—if cipher it was—and he had a portion of it copied

out and sent to an expert; and he told Marion that the only thing he could do was to await the latter's opinion.

On the Wednesday morning, the detective, Mostyn, called on Marion with some important news.

The house in Clergy-street, which had been carefully closed and locked by the police, before the keys were delivered to Marion, had been broken into during the preceding night.

"I have been round there myself, Miss Jannaway," said the detective, "and there's no mistake about it. Someone has been in, and the place has been turned topsey-turvey in a search that has been made; the floor has been taken up in a number of places, the skirting-boards pulled away, and a grate has been taken out, and in many places the plaster has been broken. I never saw such a case."

"Can you conjecture who has done it, and why?" asked Marion.

"It looks as if someone had been there who knew there was property worth finding, and they were determined to find it," replied the detective.

"Has the furniture, such as it is, been broken at all?"

"Some of it," answered the man; "but not very much, though it has all been overhauled again; and a rigorous attempt has been made to break open the safe, which, you know, we locked. You have the keys, I think?"

"Yes," said Marion. "It's an extraordinary thing. What do you think had better be done? I, myself, have thought of having all the goods brought here," she added.

Mr. Mostyn made no direct reply to this.

"I can hardly advise you on such a matter, Miss Jannaway," he said, "but so far as we are concerned I do not

see there would be any objection. And you might like to have them under your own control," he said, lightly.

"Yes," answered the girl, innocently, "I should."

Marion acted with her usual promptness, and arranged that same afternoon for the removal of the furniture and papers from Clergy-street. She had them placed in the little room, which had been her father's bedroom, the door of which was on the half-landing at the top of the first flight of stairs.

She saw Mr. Price on the following day, and told him what she had done.

Ralph Gething, when he heard of it, was somewhat surprised, and at first was pleased. But when he asked whether the act was to be taken as a sign that Marion had given up her expressed intention of tracing the murderers, and Marion told him she was as determined as ever to carry out her intention, he was angry. He urged her not to do anything of the kind, and the discussion grew warmer than it had yet been, but Marion would not give way.

On the following day, in the afternoon, there was another surprise. When Marion returned home after a walk, she found a woman outside the house in Morris-place, who came up and spoke to her.

"Are you Miss Jannaway," she asked, as Marion stood on the doorstep.

"Yes," answered Marion, looking curiously at her, and feeling somewhat prejudiced by the woman's appearance.

"My name is Bloxam—Mrs. Bloxam," replied the latter, "and I wish to speak to you."

They went into the house together, and Marion led the way upstairs to her room.

"I was Simeon Hoadley's housekeeper," said the woman, "and have been away in the country since a week last Monday, down with a sister of mine who has been very ill. Simeon told me I could go. I only got back this morning, and when I got to Clergy-street and heard he was dead, you might have knocked me over with a feather. Then I made some inquiries of the neighbors. I know most of 'em pretty well, for I've lived a power of years in the same house, nigh on ten or twelve, I think it is; and I heard of you. So I thought I'd better come and see you at once."

"I have heard of you, Mrs. Bloxam, as having been a long time with my father," replied Marion.

"And I have, too; I have served him faithful for many a year. But I knew what I was doing all the time, though; I don't say as I didn't do that. Didn't he tell you how he promised to pay me?" said Mrs. Bloxam, looking hard at Marion.

"No," answered the girl.

"Well, then, I must tell you myself," said the woman, bluntly. "I never heard tell of you; but then, old Simeon was a deep 'un, sure enough, in most things, and why not in this? But someone else was deep, too, don't you see? Maybe it'll be a surprise to you to know that he left his property to me—leastways, his house at 50 Clergy-street, and such things as were in it." As she spoke she drew a paper from her pocket, and held it on her lap.

"If that is so," answered Marion, readily, "I shall

gladly comply with the bequest. But I am bound to tell you that so far, I have heard nothing of this, and found no mention of it among any of his papers. There is a will, you know, which is in the hands of my lawyers."

"I don't know anything about that, and I don't care, either," answered Mrs. Bloxam, roughly. "What I do know is that I've got the will here which leaves me the house in Clergy-street. You can read it if you like," and she laid it on the table, and held it open, so that it could be read. "I ain't going to be done, you know."

"I have no wish to injure you in the slightest. Apart from any writing or wills altogether, the long time you tended my father would make me anxious to do anything for you that I could."

"Well, it don't look much like it," returned Mrs. Bloxam, "seeing that you've cleared out the things already from Clergy-street. It's hard on me to be turned out of the place after all these years. It don't look like a very friendly feeling in you, I must say."

"You forget that I could not possibly know anything of all this you have said," replied Marion.

"Well, will you let me have the house, then," asked Mrs. Bloxham, "without forcing me to have the law on you?"

"I am inclined to do what you ask," replied Marion; "but I have placed the whole matter in the hands of a lawyer, and I feel that I must first consult him. You would like to have the house to live in, I presume, you mean, without paying the rent?"

"No, I don't," answered Mrs. Bloxam, relapsing into her bluntest manner. "I mean to have it for my own,

just as this will gives it to me, with everything in it at the time of Simeon Hoadley's death; that's what he promised me. There's this writing to prove it," and she held out the will as she spoke.

"No, I cannot do that," answered Marion. "My father expressly told me not to sell or part with the houses, at least until certain conditions had been fulfilled, and I cannot do so unless of course the will you have there is a rightful one. We will have that made clear."

"Well, will you let me live there, then?"

"Yes, I will probably do that," said Marion.

"But they tell me you've cleared out my things as well as the old man's—I suppose you'll put 'em back?"

"If I let you have the house, yes. I have had the furniture brought here for the sake of safety, that is all. I do not want it, however, and if you are in the Clergy-street house to take care of it, I am quite willing to leave it there."

This reply seemed to satisfy Mrs. Bloxam that Marion's intentions toward her were friendly, and she grew less hostile in her manner and rough in her speaking.

"I've no call to quarrel with you," she said, "and I'd much rather come to some terms. When will you let me know about the house? I've got nowheres to sleep now."

"As soon as I can. Where can I find you if I want you?"

"Eh? Oh, I don't know. I haven't any regular address, but if you'll name a day I'll come to you," said Mrs. Bloxam, rising to go.

"Very well; if you will come on Saturday I will let you know. Before you go now, I should like to ask you

one or two questions about my father. Have you been to the police?"

"No," returned the woman, quickly. "What do I want to go to the police for?"

"They wish to see you in order to get particulars of the people who used to visit my father. Can you describe any of these to me?"

"What's the good of describing any of 'em," answered Mrs. Bloxam. "I might give a whole dictionary full, and where would you be the wiser."

"Do you suppose he had any money or valuables in his possession while he was living there, Mrs. Bloxam?"

"Really, I don't know. All I know is that he never seemed to have any. He gave me house room, and I fed him in return. He used to talk sometimes about having a few pounds—'cause he promised 'em to me—though I never thought he was doing more than bragging a bit. But, there, you never knew what his game was," and Mrs. Bloxam shook her head disconsolately, "he was that deep and artful."

"I suppose you could recognize the people who used to come to the house, Mrs. Bloxam?" asked Marion, after a pause.

"Of course I could—at least, most of 'em, I think; some I never used to see, because old Simeon would open the door himself and let 'em in, and then afterwards let 'em out again. But I used to catch sight of most of 'em, somehow or other, for I don't mind saying I was curious at times."

"What was the nature of his business, Mrs. Bloxam?"

"The nature of his business! What, don't you know?"

"No," replied Marion.

"Well, he used to buy things and sell 'em again," answered the woman, drily. "Only he didn't used to care where they came from. He asked no questions, he didn't, and used to buy as cheap as he could, and sell as dear. It wasn't many people as could catch him napping."

"But he had no shop, Mrs. Bloxam; how did he sell what he bought?"

"Don't you ask too many questions, else you mayn't care for the answers you'll get," said the woman, nodding her head, significantly.

"But I wish to know the truth."

"Well, then, you won't know it from me; I've no call to tell you, and I'm not a-going to; and you wouldn't thank me if I did—leastways, I ain't going to say nothing until you've settled that little matter about my having the house."

The girl was silent for a minute, and then spoke abruptly and pointedly, and watched the woman closely to note the effect of her next question.

"Who is James Linnegan?"

Mrs. Bloxam started at the questions and changed color slightly.

"James who?" she asked, as if to gain time.

"James Linnegan," repeated Marion.

"Oh, now I know who you mean. You mean the man as tried to shoot old Simeon five or six years ago, and got sent to penal servitude for twenty years—and serve him right, the murderous villain. If it hadn't a been for me, he'd a killed your old father."

"You know he has been liberated recently?"

"What, him liberated? James Linnegan? Well, then, you don't need to look far for the man who's done this murder," answered the woman. "I thought I saw him hanging about Clergy-street one night, just before I went away to my poor sister. Yet I thought it couldn't be him, 'cause he was in jail. I'll bet it was him, after all; he's a right down dangerous villain," she said, excitedly. "He swore he'd have your father's life, and now he's done it when my back was turned."

"You must tell the police, Mrs. Bloxam, what you know of him, and especially that you have seen him in the neighborhood."

"I'll tell them willingly enough. Fancy, James Linnegan at liberty! Why, I know he went for twenty years; I was in court, and heard the sentence."

"He has been liberated and pardoned," said Marion; and she told the other such of the circumstances as she knew, while she got ready hastily to go out.

"We will go at once to the police," she said, "in order that they make inquiries; and then I will go to the lawyers about the house in Clergy-street. It is a great pity that you were not in London yesterday," said Marion, as they went out together, "so that you could have given your evidence at the inquest. It only closed yesterday with a verdict of murder against some person unknown. Had your evidence been given, it might have served to give a definite direction to the opinion of the jury."

They went together to the police station, and Mrs. Bloxam told her tale over again, and was questioned closely as to her recognition of the man Linnegan; but

she was very positive; and her statement produced a considerable effect upon the minds of the police.

On leaving the station, Marion went to see Mr. Price in reference to the alleged will which Mrs. Bloxam had produced, and in regard to letting her have the house. The lawyer was doubtful of the wisdom of doing this, but said he would consider the matter.

It was late in the afternoon before Marion started to walk home. She had not gone very far before the idea occurred to her that someone was following her. Whenever she turned to look back, a young, sharp-looking, shabbily-dressed lad seemed to be watching her movements. He was clearly inexperienced at the work. When Marion stopped the lad stopped; when she moved on, he followed. She tested her belief by walking at a sharp pace through several of the short streets which lie at the top of Clerkenwell, near to the Angel, and the lad followed her closely.

Once when she thought she had shaken him off, she entered a shop, and tried to keep out of sight of the passers-by; but, after a minute or two, the lad's head was thrust cautiously, but quickly round the door, and the eyes seemed to brighten as they fell on Marion, who was standing as much out of sight as possible.

He was waiting for her when she left the place, and he followed her into a tramcar, sitting close to the door. She got out again quickly, as if she had forgotten something, and hailed a cab, telling the man to drive quickly in a certain direction. When he had driven for a short time she looked out of the window, and as she could see nothing

of the lad, she told the man to drive back to Highbury Station. There she got out and paid the man and walked away, congratulating herself on having got rid of the young spy.

But, as she left the place, the lad came out from behind the cab, where he had been riding, and followed her again though at a greater distance.

It was therefore with some anger, and a little fear, that when Marion ran up the steps of the house in Morris-place, she saw the lad saunter quietly past the end of the street and look swiftly and keenly in her direction.

CHAPTER XII

BURGLARY AT MORRIS-PLACE

THAT she had really been followed in the street Marion had no doubt, and the incident made her uncomfortable. In the next few days whenever she went out, she looked round for the lad, but did not see him again. Once or twice she thought she was being followed; but the girl could not possibly detect anyone in the act.

Her uneasiness continued, however, and tended to increase; and the feeling of disquiet rendered her nervous and rather afraid. She went again to see Mr. Price in regard to Mrs. Bloxam's request, and he advised her not to comply with it. He said that he did not believe in the story of the will, and that if it were the case that she had what she believed to be a will, it was most unlikely that it could be of a date later than that which Simeon Hoadley had lodged with the bank manager. Moreover, he urged her not to part with possession of the house until at least they had been able to determine whether there was, or was not, any meaning in the cipher. In the letter left with Marion, she had been expressly warned by her father against doing this, and Mr. Price thought that desire should be complied with.

Mrs. Bloxam took the refusal quietly enough, but de-

clared that though she was really reduced to the greatest straits, she did not desire more than her legal rights, whatever these might be; and gave Marion to understand that she would take some kind of steps to secure them.

One evening, soon after Marion had announced her decision to Mrs. Bloxam, she was alone in her room when she was called down to the front door by a somewhat loud knocking.

"You have some rooms to let, miss, I believe, haven't you?" The question was asked by a middle-aged woman, who, in company with a man, was standing at the door.

Marion looked at them both rather keenly, and came to the conclusion that she did not like them.

"Who sent you here?" she asked.

"Mr. Davies, the milkman, in Holloway-road," answered the woman readily. "He told us your parlors and kitchens were empty, and that's just what we want." While the woman had been speaking the man had said nothing, but had kept staring into the house and at the front door in so strange a way that Marion could not fail to notice it.

"The rooms were empty, but I've let them," answered Marion, rather abruptly. She liked the two less the more she saw of them.

"How can that be?" asked the woman, putting her foot inside the door to prevent Marion from shutting it. "I can see from here that they are empty."

"I tell you I have let the rooms, and the tenants are coming in to-morrow," said Marion. She had not let the rooms, but was determined not to take these people as tenants. The woman continued to speak, keeping her

foot inside the door to prevent its being shut, until the man pulled her shawl to get her away. He did this without saying a word; but the woman obeyed him instantly, muttered a kind of apology for having disturbed Marion, and left.

The girl looked after them, and watched them as they walked away together to the end of the street.

"I should know those two again, anywhere, I think. I believe, I could recognize the man by his walk from behind. I wonder who they are and what they want. I wouldn't have them in the house if they'd pay three times the usual rent."

By this time she had accustomed herself to pay attention to very small matters, and it occurred to her as peculiar, that the man had not uttered a word; then her memory of the man's face made her think that the peculiar look it wore, might be the result of some disguise; and it occurred to her that his beard and moustache had been false.

This thought increased her discomfort and nervousness, and before she went to bed that night, she made a most careful inspection of the fastenings in the lower part of the house. A man and his wife had been living in the two rooms on the ground floor, but they had left about a week before, and the rooms and kitchens beneath them were empty. The only other people in the house beside herself were a man and his wife, who had rooms on the floor above Marion's. These people she knew well, as they had lived in the house some considerable time.

Marion was not afraid—indeed she would not have feared to sleep in the house alone; but her nerves had

been a good deal tried by the occurrences of the past few days.

After she had seen that all the doors and windows of the house were properly fastened, she went back to her room and sat down to a book with which she was trying to wean her thoughts from other matters. She read for a long time, and then, when she came to a part of the book which was less engrossing, her attention wandered away to her own affairs, and she let the book rest on her lap.

Things had not gone well with her during the last few days, and she was growing more and more discontented. There was no sign of any discovery of the meaning of the extraordinary paper which her father had left in his will; and it began to be probable that the puzzle would never be solved.

Moreover, the police were making no progress at all in the direction of discovering the murderer of her father. Mrs. Bloxam had told the police about James Linnegan, but they either could not, or did not try to find him; and precious time was slipping away. The thought of this distressed Marion very much, and she was growing very anxious that some more definite and energetic action should be taken.

Lastly, Ralph Gething's conduct had pained and grieved her ever since she had resisted the wish he had expressed that no steps should be taken to trace Simeon Hoadley's murderer. Ralph did not come to see her so frequently, and when they were together he had been irritable, low-spirited, and sharp-tempered. Several times, moreover, his manner had made the girl feel and fear that he had

some secret from her which depressed him; and this had made her very uncomfortable.

For some days the resolution had been forming in her mind that she herself would take up the task of trying to find the man who had killed her father; and as she sat thinking on this night, the plan began to gather strength and to take a much clearer shape in her thoughts.

She blamed herself for having allowed so many days to pass without doing something, and resolved that, on the following day she would commence an active and systematic search.

Soon after she had made this firm resolution, she went to bed, and was surprised to find that it was already one o'clock. The time had passed very quickly while she had been reading and thinking. She was restless, however, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and her brain had been so active that she could not get to sleep.

She grew a little drowsy at last, after resolutely suppressing every thought and idea, and was nearly asleep, when she heard a sound that made her wide awake in a moment.

What was it? Where was it? Who was it?

It had seemed to be a sound of something that had fallen; it was like a sound of iron falling on stone.

She sat up in bed and listened; but could hear nothing whatever. She knew that she had really heard something and that it was no mere dream. And she determined at once to try and discover the cause.

It could not have been in the rooms above hers, as no noise from there could have had so sharp and distinct a ring.

It must have been in her sitting-room or downstairs. In either case, it meant probably that some one was in the house. Then she reflected that such a sound could not have traveled up from the inside of the house; the echoes would have muffled the metallic clang.

It must have been outside. She recalled that under her window at the bottom of the house the yard was paved with flag stones; and concluded that the sound had come up from them, and that she had heard it through her window.

While these reflections were passing through her mind, making her heart beat fast, she hastily slipped on her black dress, and, remembering that she must be able to move absolutely without noise, she took a pair of heavy, thick woollen stockings, and drew them on in place of shoes. Then she crept from the room.

She went first into her sitting-room, after waiting and listening intently at the door. It was empty, just as she had left it. She had no light; and moving silently across the room, she moved the blind aside and looked out.

It was a dark, misty, wet night; but she fancied that she could see the form of a man standing against the railings on the opposite side of the road, close by a lamp-post. Next she turned and went out on to the landing, and listened.

She could hear nothing; and began to doubt whether she had been altogether mistaken. She had intended to go up to the people above and wake them; but resolved not to do this, when it appeared possible that she had made a mistake. Instead of going upstairs, she went

down the staircase, as noiselessly as a ghost, stopping every few steps to listen.

As she passed the door of the room on the half-landing, where the furniture from Clergy-street had been stored, she placed her ear to the door and listened; but all was still, and she continued her way down the stairs.

When she reached the rooms on the level of the hall, she paused again, and listened with almost painful eagerness at each door; but she heard nothing, and when she tried the handles she found both doors locked, the keys being outside.

Then she went to the staircase leading to the basement and listened again; and hearing nothing crept down noiselessly. She had reached almost the bottom when she stopped and pressed her hand to her heart.

Someone was trying to break into the house at the back. She could hear the noise distinctly.

She turned at once to go upstairs again and wake the man who slept at the top of the house, and was half-way up the staircase when a thought stopped her.

The burglar was not yet inside the house and could do her no harm; and she ought to try and see him so as to be able to recognize him again.

This thought excited her painfully, and she fought out a battle between her sense of duty and her fears.

Duty won, and she went down the stairs again, holding her breath, and peeped into the back room. It was empty, and she then remembered that she herself had locked the door which led from the room into the scullery behind. This gave her confidence. She entered the room, and

keeping close to the wall and stooping down she went across to the windows and looked out.

There was a man in the yard; and at the moment she looked out, he was examining the point or edge of some tool by the light of a bull's-eye lantern, which was placed on the ledge of the small, square scullery window.

She watched him closely, and once or twice, as he bent forward and his face came within the little circle of light, thrown by the lantern, she thought the rather heavy features were familiar to her, but she could not recall where she had seen them.

Suddenly the man picked up the lantern, and turned the light full on to the window out of which Marion was so intently watching him; and his action was so quick that the girl was startled as she found the rays flash across her. She shrank back instantly and almost instinctively into the corner next to the window, alarmed lest the man should have caught sight of her; and she crouched down against the wall, and held her breath in her excitement.

Apparently he had not noticed her, for the next instant the light was turned on to a particular spot of one of the window bars, and the girl heard the sound of a file, as the man worked at the bar with the evident intention of removing it in order to enter the house.

Marion started up to leave the place and get assistance, but the light from the lantern shone clearly through the window in such a position that she could not get to the door without passing across it, and if she did this the man could hardly fail to see her.

She kept still, therefore, and listened intently to the rasping sound of the file as it worked its way through the

bar. After a few minutes the sound stopped, and she heard the file laid aside. Then came a violent pull at the bar, and the sound as it was wrenched out of its place warned the girl that in another minute or two the man would be inside the house.

CHAPTER XIII

A PERILOUS RESOLVE

WHEN the girl recognized that the man's task of breaking into the house was so nearly completed, she began to feel afraid that she had stayed too long in the room to be able to get away without risk to herself, or at least without scaring the man away from the house; and now she was very unwilling to do this.

While she had been watching him, she had also been considering why he should be making so determined an attempt to break into a half-empty house. There was nothing that she possessed that could possibly tempt a burglar. The people at the top of the house were no better off than herself, and if the whole of their possessions could have been carried away, they would have yielded only a scanty reward for the thief.

Then it had occurred to Marion that the man had come after the goods that had been removed from Clergy-street, and she was anxious to see whether this was the case.

All fear had left her. Conscious that help was at hand if she needed it, and that she could easily rouse the man upstairs—whose name was Peters—she was very anxious not to let the thief know that his movements were observed.

Her reason for this was that if the man was breaking in, in order to get access to the property brought from Clergy-street, he was probably connected in some way with the murder. She might in the result, therefore, be able to trace him.

She watched his every action with the keenest vigilance, and it was her eagerness that had led her to place herself in such a position as that the line of the lantern's light lay between her and the door of the room.

As soon as the man had wrenched the bar from its position, he turned the lantern for a moment on to the fastening of the window and examined it. That instant was enough for Marion who crossed the room very quickly and quite noiselessly.

She now watched him from a safe distance, and with the means of retreat assured to her.

The man placed the lantern on the window-sill again, and inserted something between the window frames. The girl heard the fastening spring back and saw the man raise the window very gently and slowly, until it was high enough up for him to pass through. He put the lantern through and flashed it all over the room while he peered in, his head and shoulders being through the window. Then he made the lantern dark and prepared to enter the room.

At that moment, Marion turned and ran swiftly and silently up the first flight of stairs, and waited and listened. She heard him pull back the bar into its place and lower the window, take off his boots, unlock the doors so that he could get out without hindrance, and then creep towards her across the room.

She had determined to watch him, if possible, and mark all that he did. The question in her mind was which of the rooms he would attempt to enter.

She ran lightly up the flight of stairs leading from the hall, and then stopped to see whether he would attempt to enter the empty rooms on the hall floor, or make at once for the room in which the furniture from Clergy street was stored.

She heard him come gently up the kitchen stairs, and presently saw the dim outline of his figure as he reached the hall. He did not stop in his progress; all that he did was to throw one quick flash of his lantern around, as if to make sure where he was.

The girl held her breath and moved as lightly as possible, keeping close to the wall as she passed on up the stairs ahead of him, fearing lest the stairs might creak beneath her feet, and so give the man warning.

She made no noise, however, and going past her own room, went up a few stairs and then looked cautiously down over the balustrade to watch the man.

He went straight to the little room, and Marion saw him standing in front of it, examining the fastenings by the little circle of light thrown by the lantern, when held close to the door.

After about a minute's scrutiny, the man took some keys from his pocket and tried them one after another in the lock. One of them seemed to fit and with a little trouble he succeeded in opening the door. As he was doing this, he had to bend down once or twice, and the lantern, which he had placed on the floor, enabled Marion to see his back. Instantly, she recognized it, or thought

she could do so, as that of the man who had come to the house in the evening with the woman to ask if there were rooms to let.

As this occurred to her, she hurried upstairs and awoke the lodgers there; told them what had occurred, and asked Mr. Peters to come down with her, and endeavor to catch the burglar in the act. He came instantly, and as they crept to the door and listened, they heard the man moving in the room. Thinking to surprise him, Mr. Peters tried to open the door gently; but found it fastened. Then he knocked loudly and called to the man to open the door, and at the same time told his wife who had come down, pale and frightened, to run to the front door and call the police.

Inside the room a good deal of noise was made, some of the furniture was knocked down, and the window was opened. Mr. Peters tried to force the door; but did not succeed until a policeman arrived. Then acting together, they soon had the door open; but the room was empty.

The man had escaped by the window, climbing over some low roofs on to the wall of the yard. The constable fetched assistance and a search was made of all the likely places at the back, but nothing was found; and the only result of it all was the discovery of a crow-bar, or "jimmy," which the man had dropped in his flight.

Marion was very disappointed at the result, and blamed herself for the man's escape. As the constable said, if she had given the alarm in the first instance to him, the house could have been surrounded, when the man must have been captured.

As early as possible on the following morning, Marion went to tell Mr. Price of what had happened.

He looked very grave at the story, and asked a number of questions.

"Have you examined these things from Clergy-street, Miss Jannaway!"

"Yes," replied Marion; "nearly all of them. I may say all."

"Have you found nothing in them?"

"Nothing at all. I have not looked over every individual paper; and there are many old deeds and law papers, several of which are marked 'canceled,' that I have not read. But I have opened everything, and so far as I can judge there is nothing to be found."

"Well, I will tell you how it strikes me. I may be wrong, but I think the matter is worth looking into. It seems to me not at all unlikely that this man, last night, was following the goods from Clergy-street because he had not been able to examine them as closely as he wished while they remained there; and it really looks as if he and those who are working with him—for I don't suppose he is alone—know, what we only believe, that there are valuables among your father's property. Anyway, if they do not know it, they think it; and that ought to be enough for us, if we act discreetly.

"What do you think we can do, Mr. Price?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I believe would be a good step. Make these goods a decoy. Put them back into the house in Clergy-street, and have the place watched in the most thorough manner. By-the-way, how many

people knew that the things had been taken from Clergy-street to Morris-place?"

"That's impossible to say. They were removed quite publicly, and anyone might have followed the van. I myself have been followed several times in the street; and if anyone would follow me, they would much more easily follow a loaded van," replied Marion.

"But how came the man to spot the room in the house where you had stored them?"

"That is not quite so easy to see, perhaps," returned Marion; "unless those who followed the van were able to see where the goods were placed. This may have been the case, because, when the safe was carried in, some men in the street were asked to help, as it was too heavy for the men with the van."

"I see," replied the lawyer, "that might easily have been the case. At any rate, I do not think it is safe for you to be in the house without greater protection than you have."

"I am not afraid," said Marion, "but I will act upon that suggestion of yours, to make the goods a decoy."

She set about the task immediately she left the lawyer's office. She went to a locksmith and told him to send a couple of men at once to 50 Clergy-street, to examine all the locks and fastenings; and she went with them herself, and left the door of the house open and the windows, so that the neighbors could see that some preparations were being made in the house, and that some change was contemplated.

She kept passing in and out of the house and drew

as much attention as possible to what was being done. She even went so far as to engage a couple of men whom she found in the street, to be at the house at a certain time, to help in carrying in the safe which she meant to send back with the goods to the house.

While she was busy with these preparations she was also occupied with the very important question—"Who was to watch the house?"

If Mr. Price was right in thinking that the goods would form a bait which would attract the thieves to the house, it was essential that the work should be done with the greatest shrewdness and vigilance, and in a way that would not be suspected outside.

Then it occurred to her that if the thief of the previous night was really in league with the murderers of her father, and was resolved to follow up the goods, he might see the trap too easily if the goods were put back into the house without any reason. As all her present actions were based on the assumption that in some way the murderer had means of learning her movements, she resolved to give it out that the house was being got ready for herself, that she intended to live there, and that her furniture was to be moved into the house for that purpose. She declared, however, that she would not take possession of the house for a week, and she reckoned that the man would make his attack on the house within that time, if he made it at all. She went, therefore, to several of the houses in the street, and, saying that she would want someone to do the rough work of the house from that day week—it was then Friday—she asked if they could tell her of a likely person.

In this way she reckoned that the fact of her coming to stay at the house would soon get known, while it would be supposed that the furniture would be unprotected in the house for a week.

What had to be done, therefore, was to arrange for a thoroughly efficient watch being kept on the house during that week. Who was to do this?

Surely, there was no one who would do it so thoroughly as herself!

When the thought occurred to her it startled her a little, for a moment; but she recognized that it was in reality by far the best course, and she soon conquered all her apprehensions and resolved that she would take it.

She decided to get into the house without being seen, and to remain there for the whole of the week, during which it would be thought to be unoccupied.

It was a daring resolve; but Marion was no ordinary girl.

CHAPTER XIV

MARION'S VIGIL AT CLERGY-STREET

As soon as Marion had formed the decision to remain in the house in Clergy-street she commenced to make the necessary preparations. She went away at once and had the safe brought from Morris-place, and sent with it only a little of the furniture. The rest she arranged to have carried round after dusk, so that she might take an opportunity of getting into the house and remaining there unobserved.

Then she had to provide herself with enough food to last a week. Moreover it had to be of such a kind as would need no cooking; since it was obvious she must not attempt to light a fire. She purchased as much tinned meat and fruits as she thought would suffice for a week, with biscuits instead of bread. These things she packed carefully in the safe before she sent it away to the house.

There were several points which gave her much thought. In the first place she must be prepared to defend herself against any danger; and for this purpose she determined to have fire-arms. She bought a revolver and a supply of cartridges, therefore, and congratulated herself on the fact that she had already learnt how to use the weapon.

Another important consideration was to provide some means of escape from the house in case she should be compelled to fly. For this purpose she examined the house very carefully, and found that from the back window of the first floor, she could get out on to a low roof and so escape into the garden; and that from the front room she could, if necessary, jump; or if there was time to make a more leisurely escape, she could get a footing on the small old-fashioned ledge which jutted out over the front door, and from there could drop into the street.

She examined all these points with great caution and coolness. She knew well enough that the task she was going to undertake was one of danger as well as difficulty; and tried to minimise the risk as far as possible. She remembered that when the man had broken into Morris-place on the previous night, the calmness with which she had watched his movements so closely had been due to the assurance that means of rescue were at hand; and she knew that this sense of safety was necessary to her if she meant to succeed in Clergy-street.

There was another matter that claimed careful attention. She had learnt from Mrs. Bloxam that the front room on the ground floor was the only room which her father had used for some years. It was in this he had been killed. She was acting on the assumption that anyone who followed the goods to the house would have a knowledge of her father's habits, and if the furniture were placed in the room as before it would be to that room that the thieves in all probability would go. She therefore made a double preparation. She had most of

the furniture replaced in such positions as it had formerly occupied; and she contrived a means by which she would be able to watch from the room over it anything that might go on in her father's room or anybody who might enter it. For this purpose she took advantage of the fact that the ceiling in the lower room had fallen down in one or two places, and had not been repaired. By having a couple of the floor boards in the room upstairs taken up, and by displacing some of the ceiling laths, she was able to see over nearly the whole of the room beneath.

As soon as the safe had been delivered, she left the house and returned to Morris-place to make her last preparations. She determined that the fact of her presence in Clergy-street should be known to no one—not even to Ralph. She thought that if she told him, he would either try to dissuade her, or, failing that, would be led by anxiety to watch the house at Clergy-street to such an extent as to foil the object she had in view.

Very much the same reasoning prevailed with her in regard to the solicitor, Mr. Price; and she therefore wrote to both of them, saying that she had been called away from London, and might not return for a week. At Morris-place, she told the people she was going down into Devonshire, and mentioned the name of a small town in that county as her destination; but she asked that if any strangers came to the house for her, no information of any kind should be given to them, beyond the fact that at the moment she was not at home.

After that, she completed the final arrangements, and, as soon as the van came for the remainder of the fur-

niture, she set out bravely enough on what she knew might be a very perilous adventure.

Her first difficulty was to hide the fact of her presence in the house at the outset. This she managed by not showing herself at all in the front of the house during the time the van was there; and by getting one of the men, when he left, to slam the door with plenty of noise, and to stand for a moment as if to lock it.

"I am going to put some of the things in order," she said to him, in explanation, "before I leave to-night, and I don't want a lot of people knocking at the door to interrupt me. If they think the house is empty they won't bother."

The sound of the door as it closed behind the men, and the noise of the wheels as the van was driven away, caused Marion to feel exceedingly lonely, and seemed to make her, for the first time, fully sensible of the dreariness and danger of the course she had taken.

She would not allow herself to give way to the feeling, however; but went about very quietly, but very busily, making such preparations as she thought necessary.

While the furniture was being brought in, she had made herself perfectly acquainted with the plan of the house, so that she could find her way about in the dark —for it was quite dark in the house—and as she had determined to use the front room on the upper floor while in the house, she carried up to it such things as she was likely to need.

In the earlier part of the day, by means of some small holes in the blinds, she had been careful to provide

means of being able to look out into the street in front, and into the yards at the rear, without being observed.

When she had carried up all the articles of furniture that she intended to use, and had tired herself in the work, she sat down on a folding-chair bedstead which she had provided, to rest and think.

The silence and darkness were a great trial to her nerves; and when the stillness was broken, as it was occasionally, by the rapid scurrying of rats and mice underneath the boards, she would start up as if someone were in the house.

An empty house is always melancholy. The echoes of noises from the outside, the creaking of doors, the rattling of windows, the mysterious cracks which the timbers give, the moaning and sobbing and rustling of the wind in chimneys and windows and through keyholes, all have a disquieting effect, the discomfort and dreariness of which are increased a hundredfold by utter darkness.

After she had been sitting some time brooding upon the lonesomeness of the situation, Marion heard the bell in some neighboring clock tower strike nine.

This suggested a curious line of reflection to her.

When was any attempt likely to be made upon the house? It seemed probable to her that nothing would happen that night. It was likely, she believed, that the news of her father's goods being put back into the house would be known, but if there was any idea that the plan was intended as a trap, ordinary caution would suggest the advisability of letting at least one night pass without doing more than watch the house closely. She thought

it extremely likely that more than one pair of cunning, evil, desperate eyes were at that moment bent upon the place; and sharp ears might be listening for the least sound of any movement inside the house.

Then she tried to judge what would be the hour at which the house would be entered. If the object was a search among her father's property, it was most probable that the thieves would seek to have as long a time as possible for the search, and she reckoned that she might expect them as early in the evening as they could safely venture to break in. If the people likely to come to the place were really the murderers of her father, they would be certain to be very much more cautious, she thought, than any ordinary thieves, because they would feel the danger of being discovered in the act of ransacking the goods of the man they had killed. Suspicion of the graver crime would certainly attach to them, and the fear of this suspicion would be greater in proportion to their guilt.

She came, therefore, to two conclusions; first, that the attack would surely be made under cover of darkness, and from the back of the house, and that it would not be made that night. In some degree these considerations gave her relief. After she had been some hours in the house she would feel more accustomed to her surroundings and more able to cope with difficulties.

In order to pass the time, she had brought with her one or two books and the cipher which had been left in the will.

She had provided herself with a dark lantern, the value of which to her for her present purposes had been

suggested by the use which she had seen the burglar make of one at Morris-place on the preceding night.

Taking the utmost precaution against any ray of light showing on the blind, she lit the lantern and held it just at such a distance from the paper as that the round disc of light was focussed entirely upon it. In this way she read and re-read the cipher; renewing a most pains-taking study of it, at a point where she believed she had found a slight clue. She found it difficult to fix her thoughts upon it, owing to her novel position; and she therefore took up one of the books she had brought with her and read it instead.

The hours passed wearily away; but her vigilance did not relax in the slightest. Whenever she found herself growing sleepy, she rose from the chair, turned the slide of the lantern and walked up and down the room to keep herself awake. Gradually she grew accustomed to the little sounds in the house and ceased to pay heed to them. Several times at the commencement of her watch she had been startled at hearing noises; and more than once she had crept out on the landing and listened with every nerve strained to the utmost. But she had managed to account for the cause of each false alarm, or thought she had, and had laughed away her nervousness.

Thus the night passed away, and she heard every hour struck by the neighboring clock. At four o'clock she made up her mind that no attempt would be made to disturb the house at any rate until the next night, and she determined to have some sleep.

It was restless, broken, dreamful sleep at first, and more than once she awoke, nervous and frightened, and

jumped to her feet thinking that someone had broken in and the danger she feared had to be faced at once. But after some time she fell into deeper slumber, and did not awake until nearly ten o'clock.

One of her first acts was to go round the house and see that none of the fastenings of the doors or windows had been touched; and while doing that it occurred to her that she ought to make a strict search into every hole and corner of the house while she was there; and she decided to commence the work as soon as she had had something to eat.

Breakfast was a very simple matter—some tinned meat, a few biscuits, and a cup of water—and was soon finished. Then she went to her peep-holes in the blinds, and looked out. It was a dull, misty, murky day, and there was no one in the sloppy, dirty street.

After this, she went downstairs into what had been her father's room, and commenced her search. She had a week before her, she thought, and could take her time. She spent some hours in turning over, opening, reading, and scrutinizing the papers that were in the safe, but she found nothing. There were a quantity of papers and parchments, apparently leases and mortgages, but whether they were of value or not, she could not say. She thought not, because they had for the most part passed through the hands of Mr. Price, and she noticed that many had the word "canceled" written across them, while nearly all were without signatures, or seals, or stamps; these having apparently been torn off.

At any rate, there was nothing that threw any light upon the cipher, and Marion laid them all together and

put them back in the safe and locked it again. All she had so far accomplished had been to make herself weary and dirty in the work.

Under the rusty, dirty grate, and lying loose about the fire-place were some scraps of paper, some twisted up, others torn in small pieces, and all dirty and grimy. Whether they had been left there by her father or thrown there by the police when they had made their search, it was impossible to say; but the girl picked up one or two with something like idle curiosity. Feeling that they could not be of any value or importance she unrolled them carelessly.

One of them, however, surprised her very much.

It was a portion of the diagram of the keyboard of a Hammond typewriter, and on the margin in more than one place, figures were written much in the same way as they were written in the cipher. She smoothed out the paper taking the greatest care and pains, and made an eager search for any other papers of a similar character.

She was thoroughly interested now, and indeed very much excited.

She thought she had found what might prove to be the clue to the cipher that had so puzzled them all.

Every scrap of paper, however small, was brought to the light, dusted carefully, and examined intently. Every piece that seemed to have the slightest connection with that which had so excited Marion was laid with it for subsequent scrutiny, and every paper she could rake out from the dust and dirt was jealously kept for the same purpose.

At intervals, during the hours of her search, she had broken off to go to the window and look out, and once or twice she had taken special notice of the persons she had seen. Several people had seemed to her to look closely at the house as they passed, and more than one had, in passing, slackened speed and scanned the house from roof to pavement. She could recognize none of these, and could only wonder whether they had any real purpose in stopping to look, or whether they were merely vaguely attracted by knowing it was the scene of the Clergy-street murder.

One man, especially, she noticed, who took the greatest interest in the place. He passed it several times, each time looking closely at it, and once he had stopped and leant against an opposite wall and stared for some minutes at the house. Marion saw him look up and down the street, as if to satisfy himself that no one was watching him, and then he crossed the road and tried to peep into the house through the parlor window. After that he went back and entered a house some two or three doors higher up the street. From that moment Marion included the house in her scrutiny, and she was inclined to think she could see him at an upper window still watching No. 50. But the light was not clear enough for the girl to be sure that this opinion was more than fancy.

The excitement caused by the discovery of the supposed clue to the cipher led Marion to neglect in some measure the duty of watching the outside of the house; but when she had collected her papers and carried them upstairs she went at once to the blind. She stayed look-

ing out for some considerable time, and it was with intense surprise and indeed consternation that she saw Ralph Gething walk slowly past on the other side of the street, looking in the direction of the house all the time. She waited, wondering, rather painfully, what this might mean and presently he returned, loitering still more slowly than before; and looking at the house just as intently as before. She waited a long time at the peep-hole of observation, but he did not return; and the gathering dusk made it increasingly difficult to see what went on in the street.

She turned away from the window and sat still, trying to think why, when she had told Ralph in her letter, that she was going into the country, he should come to watch the house in Clergy-street.

The incident made her very uncomfortable, and in order to divert her thoughts, she prepared herself some food and ate it; and then, by the aid of the dark lantern, settled down to try and put together the pieces of the puzzle concerning the cipher.

She threw all her energy and perseverance into the work, and with untiring patience and industry she spent some hours comparing the cipher with the marks on the papers she had found, checking the figures and writing them down whenever she discovered any which seemed to correspond, and searching for any signs that might help the work of interpretation.

The first reward of her labors was the discovery that her father had used the keyboard of the typewriter, as shown in the diagram, had copied out certain of the signs on it, and in this way had formed a few simple words.

This seemed to Marion to have been by way of practice and exercise—as if the old man had used the papers which she had found for the purpose of inventing the cipher.

Her excitement at this discovery became intense.

If she once mastered these few words, and applied the knowledge to the paper written in cipher, she would probably be able to read it easily, she thought; and the thought made her heart beat fast with excitement. Then she went on steadily and laboriously with her task, and made a fresh discovery, at which she jumped up from her chair.

"I have it!" she cried, exultingly. "I see what he has done!"

At that moment a loud noise of some heavy body falling sounded through the house, and sent the blood flowing back into the girl's heart.

She caught her breath, and pressed her hand to her heart to stop its quick beating, and for the moment could do nothing. But she quickly recovered herself, and first darkened the lantern, which she had forgotten in her eagerness about the cipher. Then she took her revolver in hand, and crept out on to the landing to listen.

CHAPTER XV

A TERRIBLE SURPRISE

MARION divined immediately what had caused the noise, and guessed from what part of the house it came.

Someone was trying to break into the house, either by the back door or through the window of the back room.

She waited and listened, breathless with excitement. She was not afraid, or not conscious of fear. She felt the need of being quite cool and self-possessed. Her object was to get a sight of the persons so as to be able to identify them; and she knew that she must keep absolutely self-possessed.

She did not intend to interfere with the thieves in any way. All her movements would be directed—first, to getting a good view of them; second, to defending herself, should she be attacked or molested. She had not much expectation of this. She believed that, in all probability, the men would not come upstairs, but would make what search they wanted to make among the furniture in the room downstairs. Moreover, they would not expect anyone to be in the house but themselves, and thus would look for no one.

The time could not but be an anxious one, however, and the minutes of suspense were trying.

The silence that followed the first noise was so long that Marion began to think the men must have scared themselves and have gone away; and she determined to do down and see for herself.

She slipped off her boots as quietly as possible; she was wearing the thick stockings that had proved so serviceable two nights before, and grasping her revolver tightly in her right hand, she crept down the staircase. As she passed, one or two of the stairs creaked slightly under her weight, and each time this happened she stopped and waited, holding her breath, lest the sound should have reached the thieves.

She heard nothing, however, and continued her way. When she reached the bottom of the stairs and stood in the passage she waited again, and tried to look into the back room, the door of which opened from the passage. But she could see nothing; and then with noiseless tread she went to the door which she had purposely left open, and peeped in.

As she did so the bell in the clock tower, near at hand, struck, and the sound made her start violently, and draw back instantly. But she smiled at her own nervousness, and in order to compose herself, counted the strokes. It was eleven o'clock.

Then she looked again into the room, but there was nothing whatever to be seen.

She was about to enter, when a sound, which seemed almost at her elbow, made her turn quickly and raise the hand which held the revolver.

The sound, however, came from the kitchen, at the end of the passage. This was shut off by a door which stood

slightly open, and in the empty house the sound had traveled from there, and had seemed nearer than it was.

The man had gained an entrance, either by the kitchen window or by the back door, and was already in the house. Marion ran lightly up the stairs again, till she reached the landing outside the door of the room upstairs.

She was only just in time, for as she turned to look down, a light, guarded and guided carefully, appeared in the passage below, and the door of the kitchen was opened, and a man, the outline of whose figure she could only faintly discern, walked with cautious, hesitating footsteps along the passage toward the front room.

Despite his caution, however, his ignorance of the place led him to stumble over a half stair in the passage, and the light fell from his hand, and was extinguished in the fall.

A smothered exclamation reached the ears of the girl above, and she felt the balustrade move and tremble as he rolled against it and clutched at it to save himself. She heard him grope about the floor for the lantern till he found it; then he struck a match to relight it, but he was by this time so far forward in the passage that Marion could not see him, although she made every effort.

Next she heard him go into the front room.

Marion's next task would, she felt, be one of imminent risk. She had to cross a rather creaky floor, right above the man's head, in order to reach the place where the two boards had been taken up to admit of her seeing down into the room beneath.

The least sound made might betray her presence to the man below, and bring him up to attack her; or, what she feared quite as much, might frighten him out of the house. She was a little undecided what to do.

At last, however, she knelt down on the floor and moved an inch or two at a time, feeling her way across the floor to where the holes had been made.

In the middle of her slow progress she remembered, somewhat to her dismay, that the cipher lay on the table, together with the papers on which she had written what she believed would prove the clue to it. If any attack were made upon her and she had to escape from the house and leave these behind her, they would fall into others' hands. It was necessary to get them at once, and keep them in her possession.

She crawled to the table, therefore, and raising herself very gradually and slowly, she showed enough light from the lantern to enable her to find them and put them in her pocket; then she lay down at full length on the floor, and looked through into the room beneath.

There was a faint glimmer of light thrown by the man's lantern, but the man himself was not to be seen. Marion could hear him moving very quietly in the room, but the hole was not large enough for the girl to see over all the room.

She had therefore to crawl to the other opening; and she did this, very slowly and cautiously, not daring to move more than a few inches, without stopping to listen. Her progress, though thus very slow, was absolutely noiseless, and there was not the slightest indication on

the part of the man in the room below that he had any suspicion that he was not alone in the house.

Marion was sorely disappointed, however, to find that even from this second hole, she could see nothing of the man himself. She could hear him distinctly, could almost hear him breathe, though her heart was beating fast; but she could not see him. She craned her neck in all directions in her efforts to catch a glimpse of him, but all in vain, and there was nothing to be done but to wait for him to move into view.

He was evidently searching among such papers as were in the room; and the girl could hear the rustle and crackle of papers and parchments as he turned them over, opened them, and folded them again.

This search continued for a long time without the man moving into view; and Marion heard the clock strike one. He had been in the house two hours; and yet the time had seemed scarcely more than a few minutes.

Soon after that the man moved. She saw his shadow in the light of his lantern, and then his figure came between her and the light.

Her heart began to beat again very fast, as she thought she was about to see his face clearly; when she observed him start and turn, and then put out the light of his lantern.

Outside, in the street, a whistle sounded, followed by a shout. Then some footsteps came hurrying along the pavement, followed by a confused murmur of several voices shouting and calling loudly, with many cries and oaths. Someone seemed suddenly to fall or be knocked against the front door; and then the tumult and clamor

stopped opposite to the house. A yell was raised, with hoots and groans and some stones were thrown against the door, and one of them came crashing through the fanlight above it.

The noise increased in vehemence; the shrill hard tones of women raised in angry cries, joined with the gruff hoarse cries of men, and a chorus of hoots and groans from a number of people was kept up, while the tramping and stamping of heavy feet on the roadway and pavements, indicated that the excitement was growing. Then a shout was raised that the police were coming and, in a moment, a great shuffling of feet and stampede, with laughter and cries, which ceased gradually, showed that the crowd had run away; and when the loud, regular tread of three or four police constables, as they marched past the door, had died away in the distance, all was silent as before.

Marion had raised herself on her elbow, as she lay on the floor to listen, half-afraid that the crowd were going to break into the house, and it was not until she heard a movement in the room below that she looked down again through the broken floor.

The man was trying to strike a match, and he was now in a position which enabled Marion to watch him closely. The first match flickered for a moment and then went out, only showing a feeble light in the room for an instant.

He took more care with the second, and as its rays lightened the darkness of the room, Marion saw that which almost made her cry out with surprise. The man was stooping down with his back to the door, shading

the match as carefully as possible, intent upon re-lighting the wick of his lantern. He could not, therefore, see what Marion saw, distinctly enough—the face of another man who was looking in at the open door of the room, watching the first comer with the closest attention.

Marion held her breath with excitement and waited.

The second match failed like the first to kindle the wick, and, before another could be struck, the man at the door flashed a strong light on the other, and called to him in gruff, harsh tones:

"Now, then, what's your little game 'ere?"

The man, who was stooping down, sprang up at the words and turned round.

To her dismay, Marion recognized the face of her lover, Ralph Gething. He was disguised in shabby clothes, and his features were muffled up, but she recognized him in a moment.

"Who are you?" cried Ralph Gething; and Marion knew the voice instantly, though now it was hoarse and hollow, and rather broken.

"You'll soon find out who I am," replied the other, "when you come along o' me to the station. You'd better come quietly—else I'll put the darbies on."

"Do you mean you'll arrest me?" cried Ralph.

"Yes, that's just it. I arrest you on suspicion of being concerned in the murder of old Hoadley. Ah! would you?"

Ralph Gething had rushed at him and knocked the lantern from his hand—there was a sharp, brief violent struggle between the two men in the passage, a cry or two, then someone dashed along the passage to the back

of the house; a door was slammed violently, and then all was still again.

Marion was so horrified by the discovery that it was Ralph Gething who had broken into the house, and so frightened by the events that had followed upon his being found by the detective, that she lay still on the floor unable to move.

What could it all mean? All the little doubts she had entertained about her lover—the coincidences as she had called them—crowded upon her memory, as she lay wondering what would be the outcome of his arrest, and they seemed to confirm the opinion of his guilt, almost beyond the possibility of doubt.

She was too overcome to be able to think connectedly; but, gradually, one idea took shape in her mind, and one desire possessed her, driving out all others.

She must get away from the house. If she could have guessed, even remotely, any part of the terrible discovery she had made, she would never have come.

While she was thinking in this confused, pained way, she began to feel almost afraid. This was one of the effects of the shock upon her nerves. She had been brave enough before; but, now that the real danger seemed to be over, her fears overcame her. She longed with intense desire to get out of the house and yet was afraid to try and go away.

She waited a little time to get calmer and more self-possessed, and at length, by dint of great effort, she mastered her fears.

Just when she was about to rise from the ground, however, she heard again someone moving downstairs.

A door opened, and soft muffled footsteps came along the passage, and a man entered the front room.

It was he who had surprised Ralph Gething and had said he would arrest him.

Ralph had escaped apparently, and Marion's heart beat joyously, and yet anxiously at the thought. She looked through into the room below and watched the man.

He was sitting down, looking into his lantern, which he had found and relighted.

Marion recognized him directly; it was the same man who had broken into Morris-place two nights before, and the same whom she had seen that morning enter the house on the opposite side of the street.

How then could it be a detective?

She watched him with the keenest, closest interest, as he searched about the floor for something he had lost. It was a revolver, and an expression of pleasure escaped him when he found it. He examined it by the light of his lantern, and put it away in his pocket. Then he sat down and laughed softly but gruffly, as he spoke to himself in a low, husky muffled voice.

"What a green 'un!" he said chuckling, and with an oath, "if he didn't take me for a copper. What a go! Wonder who the dickens he was and what he wanted. Thought I wanted to take him to the station, the softy; and nearly downed me when he rushed at me like that. Thinks he's escaped from the police," and he chuckled again. "The fool; but he's made the place a bit too hot, to-night, with all that beastly row. Glad I saw his light and came in to stop his little game. But I shan't stop to-night. Somebody may have heard us

goin' it. I'll have a look for the swag another night," and then he left the place cautiously, and Marion breathed freely again as she heard him go down the passage to the kitchen to leave the house.

CHAPTER XVI

MY NAME IS LINNEGAN, JAMES LINNEGAN

MARION rose slowly and wearily from the floor when she heard the man leaving the house, and crept out on to the landing and listened. She heard him moving about for a few minutes muttering to himself though she could not catch the words, and at last the small kitchen window was raised, there was a sound as of someone getting out of it, and then it was lowered.

The man had gone away, and Marion was once more alone in the house. Not satisfied, however, with what she had heard, she crept down the stairs to the window for herself to find out how the two men had broke into the house. This was easily discovered. A pane of glass in the scullery window had been broken, and an iron bar which had crossed the window on the inside had been forced away. It lay on the floor, and it was the fall of this which Marion had heard in the first instance.

The girl could do nothing to secure the window, and she therefore went back upstairs.

She was troubled, miserable, and almost ill; the result of the strain of the night's events. She was not likely to be disturbed again; she felt this; and it was not from

fear that her emotion came. She was bewildered by the fact that she should have seen her lover under such circumstances.

What could have been his motive for breaking into the house and carrying on such a search? What could have been the connection between Ralph Gething and her father, that made the former wishful to pry and search among the dead man's belongings? Why should he have hidden all this from her?

If he had only breathed a wish to do anything of the kind, while the furniture had been at Morris-place, he might have spent as many hours among them, as he pleased. Why then, should he wait until she was supposed to be away from London, and come like a thief in the night, to do this? She could not understand it.

She tried very hard to make herself believe that Ralph's actions were innocent, but she could not succeed. For a few moments she persuaded herself that Ralph, knowing of, or believing in the existence of valuable property, had come to search for it in order to give it up to her. But this was too preposterous to prevail long with her; he could have carried on the search quite as thoroughly at Morris-place, or he could have asked her for the keys of the Clergy-street house and have made the search openly.

She resolved, however, to go straight to him, tell him all that she had seen, and ask him for an explanation.

But who was the other man, the man who had surprised Ralph Gething, and had pretended to be a detective?

As the girl thought of him, she closed her eyes and

lay back on the chair bedstead on which she was sitting, and recalled the whole scene, picturing to herself as vividly as possible the man's features and appearance.

It did, indeed, seem that the bait of the furniture had brought the man to the trap, and although she had not secured him, she had gained valuable information.

She knew the man now by sight, and could easily recall his rather slight, but sinewy frame, somewhat heavy features, the underpart of the face large and protruding, the pale cheeks, and small eyes. She would not forget him. She had seen him too clearly and under circumstances too strange for her ever to forget him again. He was the man who had broken into Morris-place; she had no doubt of that, no more doubt than that he was the man who had watched the house in the daytime, and then entered a house opposite.

Who was he? Why was he thus doggedly following her father's property from place to place? These were the questions she had to solve; and she was determined to do it at any cost.

Suddenly she started and jumped up from the chair, as a thought struck her. The man's features were familiar when she had seen him outside the house at Morris-place; and like a flash of light the reason came to her.

It was James Linnegan. The man whose photograph had been shown to her by the police. She recalled the man's features one by one, and compared them with her recollection of the photograph. The short, supple, sinewy body, and the small bullet shaped head. The brow low, but somewhat square; the hair cut short and turning gray; the eyes small, and closely set, giving a look of

quick, eager, clever, cunning to the face; and more than all, the heavy jowl, protruding and making the face stern, hard and unpleasant. Yes, the more she thought of it, the more certain she was that the man was James Linnegan.

This added immensely to the importance of the discoveries she had made. Not only did she know Linnegan by sight, and had actually seen him on the spot where his crime had been committed, but she knew where he was to be found. Her vigil had indeed been important. Now, it was clear enough why her movements had all been so easily followed.

She waited impatiently for the time to come for her to leave the house, and she put together all the things she wished to take away. It would be best that if the house were searched again by Linnegan during her absence, the food she had brought with her and the lantern, should not be found by him, as in that event his suspicions might be roused, and he might fly.

Such of them as she could carry, she determined to take away with her, and the rest she hid under the boards in the room.

When the clock struck five, she decided to start; but then she reflected that, if she was seen when leaving the house, all her work would be undone, as the man Linnegan would be on his guard directly. Nor could she tell how many of the people in the street might be in league with him, and ready to report to him anything they saw.

She went to the window and looked out through the hole in the blind; but all was as dark as midnight. There

was not a light to be seen in any of the houses. But other people could wait and watch in the dark, just as well as she herself, she thought; and it was most likely that more than one pair of eyes would be watching the house.

Could she manage to get out of the house from the back? She remembered as this idea occurred to her that the detective had spoken of a gateway or yard some little distance down the street by which it was possible to get to the walls at the back; and she determined to try and leave the place by that means.

To her surprise and pleasure, she found this was easier than she anticipated. At the bottom of the yard of No. 50 a box had been placed against the wall, probably by one of the men who had broken in, and with the help of this, she had little difficulty in getting on to the wall. But she could not trust herself to walk along the wall in the darkness, and she had therefore to crawl along it, in the best way she could on her hands and knees. She made slow progress, but she found the yard at length, and managed to drop down into it, with no more mishap than that she could not keep her feet when she reached the ground. The fall was very slight and did not hurt her, and a minute afterwards, to her delight, she emerged into Clergy-street and hurried away in the direction opposite to No. 50, so that she should not be seen near the house.

She walked away, quickly, not knowing where she was going, and passed through several streets. After going some distance she met a police constable and he told her the way to the Angel. She followed his directions

without difficulty, and was soon well on her way home along the Upper-street, having met with no mishap.

She was tired, and slackened her pace considerably as soon as she felt she could do so safely.

The morning was very cold, and raw, and dark, and Marion took little or no notice of the few people she saw in the streets. Her thoughts were busy with the many exciting events that had been crowded into the last few hours. She had doubts as to the course which she ought to take; whether to go to the police at once, or to Mr. Price in the first instance. The real reason of her indecision, however, had nothing to do with either the police or Mr. Price; it was caused entirely by the fears that she had concerning the part which Ralph Gething had played in the matter.

Determined as she was that the murderer of her father should be brought to justice, she felt that she could not be the first to turn suspicion definitely upon her lover. Yet, how was she to conceal the fact of his presence in the house, if she once began to tell the story of the last thirty-six hours? Ultimately, she decided to do nothing until she had seen and questioned Ralph. The man who had committed the deed was James Linnegan. She was convinced of this, and he it was whom she resolved to track down.

She had scarcely formed this general plan of action when, as she was standing at a corner of a street to allow a milk-cart to pass, someone crossed the road toward her, walking quickly, and to her profound astonishment, she recognized the man whose name had just been in her thoughts—James Linnegan.

At first she believed that he had been following her, and half feared that he meditated an attack. But he was walking with his head bent down, and apparently had come up a cross street. When he neared her, he looked up, halted, and seemed as if about to speak; but he changed his mind and walked on at a quick pace.

She turned and followed him directly, keeping him well within view. He walked through several streets and once or twice looked round and saw Marion. Then as they came to a square, he walked round two sides of it and looked back to see if she followed, then he stopped, and Marion stopped, stooping down as if to tie up her shoe. As soon as he walked on, she followed him slowly and he went round the remaining two sides of the square. He was then satisfied that the girl was following him, and he turned a corner out of sight.

The girl quickened her pace lest he should try to get away, and as she reached the corner, he stepped in front of her and raised his hat and spoke to her.

"To what do I owe the honor of your following me?" he asked.

Marion was taken by surprise by the man's act, but answered the question with plenty of spirit.

"The streets are as free for me as for you," she said. "I am not bound to ask your leave where I may walk."

"Quite true, quite true; and answered like a girl of spirit. But that is precisely the reason why I decline to be followed by you any further." His voice was not a pleasant one, deep in tone, and somewhat husky; but his manner was by no means either rough or even rude, and he laughed as he made the last reply.

What surprised Marion most of all, however, was that he was very differently dressed. His appearance now was that of a well-to-do man of the middle class.

"I might consent, however, on one condition," he added, after a pause, "and that is that you tell me to whom I have the pleasure to speak, and what your object may be in following me."

"And what if I refuse?" asked Marion, quietly.

"Then I shall be compelled to deny you the opportunity of following me, simply by remaining where I am." He seemed to treat the matter rather as a jest than as anything else.

"My name is Jannaway—Marion Jannaway," said the girl. "I followed you to see where you were going."

"Well, that is simple enough at any rate, and truthful, too, I've no doubt. In reply then I will tell you my name is Linnegan, James Linnegan, and I object, strongly object, to your doing anything of the kind. Stay, though," he added, quickly. "Are you the Miss Jannaway who lives at Morris-place, and has a house in Clergy-street to let? If so, I shall consider this a very fortunate meeting, a very extraordinary coincidence."

"Yes, I do live at Morris-place."

"Ah, indeed, well I called there yesterday, when you were not at home," answered the man, coolly. "I wished to see you about taking the house in Clergy-street."

The girl could scarcely believe her ears; but it was evident to her that she had to do with a man of consummate coolness and daring, and she felt that she must be doubly on her guard. She now perceived how great and grave a mistake she had made in following him. If she was

not very careful he would outwit her and be scared away. Even if a policeman appeared she would hesitate about giving him into custody at once, on account of the distressing complication about Ralph Gething. This interview could do no good, therefore, and her best course seemed to her now to be to temporize with the man, disarm him of all suspicion, and get away.

"I am sorry I was not at home," she answered, "but I shall be glad to consider the matter. I am sorry also that I have annoyed you by following you. I have made a mistake I find. Please excuse me. The letting of the house will be arranged by Mr. Price, of 300 Finsbury Square, my lawyer."

"Oh, I don't like lawyers," said the man, bluntly. "My transactions with them have not always been pleasant. I would rather arrange direct with you."

"Then I will write to you," said Marion, "if you will give your address."

"Thank you, I would prefer to settle things at an interview. I am living in Highbury."

"Why do you want to take this house in Clergy-street?" asked Marion, suddenly and sharply.

James Linnegan did not reply immediately.

"Why do I want to take the house, Miss Jannaway?" he said, at length. "Why do people take houses except to live in them?"

"Well," she answered, "I cannot give you a reply yet. I am thinking of living there myself in about a week's time, but if I should not do so, and should change my mind meanwhile, I will let you know. You can call

at Morris-place, say, on Monday—if you are really in earnest about having the house."

"I am more than in earnest—I am anxious to have it," he said. "I will not fail to call."

Then Marion left him. She looked back several times to see if he was following her, but he did not; and she walked quickly in the homewards to Morris-place, scolding herself for having made such a foolish mistake as to follow and speak to him, before she was able to give him into custody.

And her heart grew very heavy as she thought of her lover and the part he had taken in the terrible scene at Clergy-street.

CHAPTER XVII

MARION SOLVES THE CIPHER

It was six o'clock when Marion reached Morris-place. She let herself into the house, and as she went upstairs she felt some curiosity, not unmixed with anxiety, as to whether any further attempt had been made in her absence to break into the house.

She found her rooms were just as she had left them, however, and with a sigh of relief and weariness she threw herself into her easy chair. The excitement and strain and fatigue of the last two days had told heavily upon her strength, and she was very tired and worn out. But there was still a great real to be done, and she grudged herself even the first few moments of delicious restfulness. She must be up and doing.

She took off her hat and jacket, lit the fire, and then put on the kettle to boil. She longed for a cup of tea. When she had had this, she was much refreshed, and then she went to her bedroom and had what she termed a "good wash," and came back to the sitting-room braced up and invigorated. She felt altogether different from the tired, weary girl who had crept slowly and rather fearsomely up the stairs only an hour before; and she was now ready again for work.

The first thing to be done was to see Ralph Gething,

and get from him an explanation of his visit to Clergy-street. This troubled her exceedingly. She did not know how to form the questions that she must put to him, but the task had to be performed, however unpleasant it might be. She was not the girl to shirk it, though she would have given all that she was worth to have been able to escape from it.

She knew her lover's ordinary movements sufficiently well to be able to fix the time to catch him before he left home for his office. He left generally at a few minutes after eight o'clock, as he made a point of always being at the office punctually by nine; and he came down to breakfast at half-past-seven. In all these little matters he was as regular as a machine, as Mrs. Gething had often said.

At half-past seven, therefore, Marion put on her hat, feeling very sad and anxious and nervous, and started. It required all the resolution she possessed to make her knock at the door of the Gethings' house; and even when she had knocked, she was half-inclined to run away.

Mrs. Gething came to the door and uttered an exclamation of surprise when she saw the girl.

"Why, Marion, whatever is the matter?" she cried; "you look as pale as a ghost. Come in, do."

"I want to see Ralph, Mrs. Gething," answered Marion, quietly.

"Come in, child, do; and don't stand there in the cold. You look perished, and no wonder," cried the good woman, who was very fond of Marion, and was distressed by her looks.

"Will you tell Ralph, Mrs. Gething? I want to see

him at once, and on a very important matter—very important to me," she added.

"You look a good deal more fit to go to bed, my dear," replied Mrs. Gething, "than to talk about important business." And she put her arms round the girl and kissed her, as soon as she had closed the door. "Why your lips are as cold as cold. Ralph isn't at home, my dear; but come in and have some breakfast."

"Not at home, Mrs. Gething," said Marion, turning a little paler at the news. "Where—where is he?"

"He went away on Saturday, somewhere; I think he went out of town. He said he might have to go, but that he would write, and would be sure and be back to-day. I expected a letter this morning, rather; but he doesn't seem to have been able to write, for I fancy the postman has gone by. Come in, child."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Gething, I must go. Do you think he'll be at the office, to-day."

"Oh, yes, my dear, he's sure to be there. But I wish you'd come and just have a cup of tea; it might do you good," said Mrs. Gething, trying to persuade the girl.

"No, thank you. I must see Ralph as soon as possible, and I'll go down to the office and wait for him there. Tell him I called, and want to see him particularly, very particularly, will you? And ask him to come to me as soon as he comes in, supposing that is I miss him at the office."

Mrs. Gething promised to do this, and tried again to persuade Marion to have some breakfast. But the girl was firm, and went away, leaving Mrs. Gething perplexed and worried at her looks and unusual conduct.

Marion left the house with a heavy heart at the news of Ralph's absence, and the false story by which he had attempted to account for it at home. She went at once to the city with the intention of seeing him the moment he arrived.

She reached Moorgate-street before nine o'clock and walked up and down opposite the large building in which was the office of Messrs. Quilter and Robinson, watching everyone who entered. The time passed wearily and slowly, and as nine o'clock approached she began to grow more anxious. She crossed the road and stood near to the door, scanning closely everyone who went in at the door.

Nine o'clock was struck by half-a-dozen different clocks, but Ralph had not arrived, and, as she knew how much he prided himself on his punctuality, her uneasiness increased. The younger clerks began to arrive in a constantly increasing stream, and many curious looks were cast at the girl, as she stood close to the door, quietly observing all who went by.

Ten o'clock struck, and still she had seen nothing of Ralph. Thinking she might have missed him she went into the office and asked for him. He had not arrived, would she wait, they asked her. She sat down in the office and waited for more than an hour. Then someone came to her and told her that perhaps he had gone on some business first, before coming to the office, as it was most unusual for him to be late, and if that was the case he might not arrive for some considerable time.

The girl considered a moment, and then said she would not wait any longer, but would leave a letter for him.

"Dear One: I *must* see you *immediately*. I was at your house early this morning, and have waited here since nine o'clock. Come *at once* to Morris-place; or send me a telegram directly you get this, saying what time you can come to me. Marion."

When she had handed this to a clerk, to be given to Ralph the moment he arrived, she left the office to go home, feeling more sad and heart-broken than she had ever before felt.

Apart from the keen desire which Marion had to be relieved from the suspense in regard to her lover's connection with the mystery of her father's death, the delay in getting from him the explanation debarred her from taking the prompt measures which she desired so earnestly to take, after her discoveries in Clergy-street; and this part of the problem harassed and worried her on her way home. The wish to have James Linnegan arrested, thwarted as it was by her fear, that in doing so, she might be placing Ralph Gething in a position of peril, galled and jaded her.

As soon as she reached Morris-place, these feelings increased tenfold. While she had been in the streets she had been in action, there had been something to do; but now came a period of inaction, and to her active energetic nature this was almost unendurable.

Feeling that she must do something, she remembered what she had almost forgotten in the excitement of the last few hours; the important discoveries she had made at Clergy-street about the secret of the cipher.

She sat down eagerly to renew the work where it had been interrupted. She laid all the papers before her

on the table and compared them again. The work was one requiring great patience and concentration of thought, but the few results she was able to obtain after a time acted as a powerful incentive and she was soon deeply interested in the task.

The clue which she had guessed at Clergy-street, was, that her father in composing the cipher had made use of the keyboard of the Hammond typewriter. On that machine, there are in all thirty ordinary keys, each of which will print three different letters or signs, according as they are required. This is arranged by means of what are called the " Master-Keys."

When one of these is depressed and an ordinary key is struck, it prints a capital letter; when the second of them is depressed, it prints a numeral or fraction, or some other sign. This latter is called the " Figure " master-key. Thus, for example the same ordinary key, which, when struck, will print a, will, if the first master-key be depressed, print A the capital; or again, if the figure master-key be depressed, it will print the numeral 7. The next key to this will print e, or E, or 8; according as the master-keys, are, or are not, used.

Marion's discovery at Clergy-street was that her father in inventing the cipher had used only those figures, fractions, and signs which the machine prints when the second master-key is held down; thus, it began: † " ¢ 9 3 3 9], &c., &c. And her guess was that these signs represented the letters which would have been printed had the master-key not been held down. Thus, that † stood for v; " for t; 1 for g; &c., &c.

With this clue the girl set to work to interpret the cipher. The first signs were:

† " 1 ¢ 9 3 3 9] 8 o ½ 6 " 2 † " 3

When she had interpreted these letters, the result disappointed her profoundly. The letters corresponding to the signs were:

v t g p i c c i u e o k . h m v t c

which was arrant nonsense, and as unintelligible as the signs themselves.

For the moment this had dashed her hopes altogether, and plunged her back into hopeless confusion. But the more she looked at the cipher, the firmer was her belief that she was on the right track. A most minute examination of the cipher showed her, moreover, that every one of the signs used—and many of them were peculiar—could only have been produced if the figure master-key had been depressed; and, so far as the typewriter was concerned, could have been produced in no other way. Then she recalled what her father had said and written about her relying upon the typewriter in any difficulties. This revived her determination, and she went at the work with renewed confidence.

The difficulty to be surmounted now was, she felt, the secret of the order of the letters.

In this chance helped her to a most fortunate discovery. She opened her typewriter and, in copying out some of the signs, made a slip, an unusual thing for her, but usual enough with a learner. She did not press down one of the keys far enough and printed a 7 where she

intended to print 8. This suggested to her that her father might have purposely changed the order of the letters in this way, and that each letter was to be taken to indicate that which came immediately before it in the order of the keyboard, so that the cipher might be additionally difficult. She tried this, but the result was just as unsatisfactory as before. Then she reversed the process; and tried whether each letter was to indicate that which followed it on the keyboard, taking each section of the keyboard by itself. On this plan she copied out the same letters as before:

† " 1 ¢ 9 3 3 9] 8 0 ½ 6 " 2 † " 3

The result was as follows:—

t h m f o l l o w i n g a r c t h e

She studied these letters for a minute, and then cried out with joy.

"Hurrah!" she exclaimed, in her excitement, as she saw that the result showed four words with only three wrong letters—

Th following ar th

She was on the track now in reality. The only difficulty to be dealt with was that of the "e." How had he written this? She puzzled out a longer piece of the writing, and interpreted it as follows—

"Thm following arc thl particulars of my w'alth m'ntionad in my will."

This was plain enough for a child to read, she thought;

but she determined not to rest until she had solved the difficulty of the "e's." She then copied out the signs which her father had used for the "e's" in that sentence; they were—

1 2 3 4 5 6.

Then she understood it in a moment. Wherever he had wished to write "e," he had used the numerals in rotation.

Her cheek flushed with excitement and her eyes glowed with pleasure at having triumphed over the difficulties as she copied out the whole of the cipher and wrote the meaning over each letter and sign, and she learnt the secret of the hidden wealth.

When she had copied it all and interpreted it, this is what she read—

To my child, Marion.

The following are the particulars of my wealth †"1 ¢9339]80½ 6"2 †"3 ⅛6"†82[36"' 9¢ 1¼]473†" mentioned in my will. I have hidden all because the 150†8906£ 80 1¼]833 8 "6*7 "8££80 633 ⅜926['1 †"2 death fear is upon me. I love my wealth, my jewels, my £36†" ¢46" 8' [⅛90 15 8 39*6 1¼]763†" 1¼ ⅜8]93' 1¼ darling diamonds, my treasured emeralds. I would have £6"380½ £86190£ 1¼ †"16'["2£ 314"63£' 8]9[3£ "6*5 them with me after death if I could. I love them; †"61]8†" 17 6¢†8" £96†" 8¢ 8 29[3£ 8 39*1 †"21 I love the sight and touch of them; the joy of 8 39*3 †"4 '8½"† 60£ †9[2" 9¢ †"51 †"6 ⅝9¼ 9¢

possessing them; of knowing them to be mine, mine, mine. ⅛9' '7' '80½ †"81 9¢ ⅛09]80½ †"91 †9 ⅛1 1802 1803 1804 Hours, days, weeks, months, years, I have spent in gaining "9[" ' £6¼']56⅞' 190†" ' ¼76" ' 8 "6*8 '⅛90† 80 ½68080½ them, one by one, little by little; but it has been a †"11 902 ⅜¼ 903 38††34 ⅜¼ 38††35 ⅜[† 8† "6' ⅜670 6 labor of love; a love that could never tire. There 36⅜9[" 9¢ 39*8 6 39*9 †"6† 29[3£ 01*2" †8"3 †"4"5 is no sight like their lovely, flashing sparkle and 8' 09 '8½"† 38⅛6 †"78" 39*83¼ ¢36"80½ '⅛6"⅛39 60£ their sweet, shining lustre.

†"18" ']23† ' "80801/2 3['†"4

First: there is gold buried in my room at Clergy ¢8" '† †"5"6 8' ½93£ ⅜["87£ 80 1¼ "991 6† 238"¼¼ street, in the right hand corner, by the window; '†"91† 80 †"2 "8½"† "60£ 29"03" ⅜¼ †"4]80£9] the third board from the wall will lift, and †"5 †"8"£ ⅜96"£ ¢"91 †"6]633]833 38¢†† 60£ the hole will be seen directly. Anyone can find this. †"7 "938]833 ⅜9 '120 £8"32†3¼ 60¼904 260 ¢80£ †"8' Anyone may. It will lead to his own detection; for 60¼905 16¼ 8†]833 367£ †9 "8' 9]o £7†32†890 ¢9" with the gold are the seal and the fish ornaments,]8†" †"9 ½93£ 6"1 †"2 '363 60£ †"4 ¢8'" 9"06150†' which Marion can identify; and whoever has them—]"82" 16"890 260 8£60†8¢¼ 60£]"97*8" "6' †"91 there are none other like them in the world—is a †"1"2 6"3 0904 9†"5" 38⅛6 †"71 80 †"8]9"3£ 8' 6 thief, a common, easily cheated thief, who will take †"89¢ 6 291190 16'83¼ 2"26†3£ †"84¢]"9]833 †6⅛5

the prize he finds to his hand and think he has all. †"6 ⅛"8$7 "7 ¢80£' †9 "8' "60£ 60£ †"80⅞ "8 "6' 633 Curses on him: let him die, and hang out his tongue in 2[" '9' 90 "81 31† "81 £82 60£ "60½ 9[† "8' †90½[3 80 useless anger at having clutched the shadow and missed ['435' ' 60½6" 6† "6*80½ 23[†2"7£ †"8 ' "6£9] 60£ 18' '9£ the substance.

†"1 '[⅜'†6022

The real treasure is really hidden.

†"3 "463 †"56'["6 8' '76331¼ "8££80

Take out the middle bar of the grate in the room. †6⅞9 9[† †"1 18££32 ⅜6" 9¢ †"3 ½"6†4 80 †"5 "991 It is hollow, and the dirty resting-place of many 8† 8' "9339] 60£ †"6 £8"†¼ "7'†80½ ⅛3628 9¢ 160¼ dainty darlings—my diamonds and emeralds. I never £680†¼ £6"380½' 1¼ £86190£' 60£ 911"63£' 8 02*3" would have a fire—I never wanted one—I could get]9[3£ "6*4 6 ¢8"5 8 06*7"]60†8£ 909 8 29[3£ ¼1† warm by only going near the grate.

]6"1 ⅜¼ 903¼ ½980½ 026" †"3 ½"6†4

The carpet is filthy with age and dirt; but in the †"5 26"⅛6† 8' ¢83†"¼]8†" 6½7 60£ £8"† ⅜[† 80 †"8 corner, by the cupboard, is a piece that will pay for 29"09" ⅜¼ †"1 2[⅛⅜96"£ 8' 6 ⅛8223 †"6†]833 ⅛6¼ ¢9" unpicking. Draw out the wash-leather, which will be [o⅛82⅞80½ £"6] 9[† †"4]6' " 356†"6"]"82"]833 ⅜7 found where the carpet is doubled, and keep the ¢9[o£]"8"9 †"1 26"½2† 8' £9[⅜33£ 60£ ⅞45⅛ †"6 contents.

290†70†'

The heavy iron safe may be searched by any thief: †"8 "96*¼ 8"90 '6¢1 16¼ ⅜2 '36"2"4£ ⅜¼ 60½ †"85¢ there is nothing valuable in it. Mind, however, not †"6"7 8' 09†"80½ *63[6⅜38 80 8† 180£ "9]9*1" 09† to throw away the heavy zinc ink-stand—the dirty, †9 †""9] 6]6¼ †"2 "36*¼ $802 80⅞ '†60£ †"4 £8"†¼ grimy thing on my table, which people always laughed ½"81¼ †"80½ 90 1¼ †6⅜35]"82" ⅛69⅜37 63]6¼' 36[½"8£ at—it is worth its weight, and more than its weight, 6† 8† 8']9"†" 8†']98½"† 60£ 19"1 †"60 8†']28½"† by many times in gold. The dirty lumps in it are ⅜¼ 160¼ †813' 80 ½93£ †"4 £8"†¼ 3[1⅛' 80 8† 6"5 emeralds; and will pay for washing.

617"63£' 60£]833 ⅛6¼ ¢9"]6'"80½

Search for a secret nook in the old bureau, where '86"2" ¢9" 6 '92"1† 099⅞ 80 †"2 93£ ⅜["36[ ]"4"5 you will find a tin case, the contents of which will ¼9[ ]833 ¢80£ 6 †80 26'6 †"7 290†80†' 9¢]"82"]833 reward you for much labor. Remove the right claw "9]6"£ ¼9[¢9" 1[2" 36⅜9[" "119*2 †"3 "8½"† 236] on the front and look for a little recess; a very 90 †"4 ¢"90† 60£ 399⅞ ¢9" 6 38††35 "627'' 6 *8"¼ small ring will then lead you to the secret of the '1633 "80½]833 †"90 316£ ¼9[†9 †"2 '32"4† 9¢ †"5 hidden stones.

"8££60 '†907'

There are many dusty, dirty papers and parchments: †"8"9 6"1 160¼ £['†¼ £8"†¼ ⅛6⅛2"' 60£ ⅛6"2"130†' burn them, they are shams—but spare the large packet ⅜["o †"41 †"5¼ 6"6 "'61' ⅜[† '⅛6"7 †"8 36"⅛9 ⅛62⅞1†

labeled Canceled. It lies on the top of all the 36⅜2333£ 26024335£ 8† 387' 90 †"8 †9⅛ 9¢ 633 †"9 others, gathers all the dust, and looks the filthiest 9†"1"' ½6†"2"' 633 †"3 £['† 60£ 399⅞' †"4 ¢83†"85'† of them all. Ha, ha, it can bear with a bad reputation. 9¢ †"61 633 "6 "6 8† 260 ⅜76"]8†" 6 ⅜86£ "8⅛[†6†890 Split the skins, and see why. In it are fifteen notes '⅛38† †"9 '⅞80' 60£ '12]"¼ 80 8† 6"3 ¢8¢†450 09†6' of five hundred pounds each.

9¢ ¢8*7 "[0£"8£ ⅛9[0£' 962"

Last of all, take heed that you do not light the 36'† 9¢ 633 †6⅞1 "23£ †"6† ¼9[£9 09† 38½"† †"4 fire with my old walking stick. It would be a costly ¢8"5]8†" 1¼ 93£]63⅜80½ '†82⅞ 8†]9[3£ ⅜86 6 29'†3¼ fire, and make you shudder with cold ever afterwards ¢8"7 60£ 16⅜8 ¼9['"[££9"]8†" 293£ 1*2" 6¢†3"]6"£' at the thought of what you have done. It was never 6† †"4 †"9[½"† 9¢]"6† ¼9["6*5 £906 8†]6' 07*8" out of my sight for twenty years; rarely out of my 9[† 9¢ 1¼ '8½"† ¢9" †]90†¼ ¼16"' "6"23¼ 9[† 9¢ 1¼ hand; always within reach; for I held in my hand five "60£ 63]6¼']8†"80 '362" ¢9" 8 "43£ 80 1¼ "60£ ¢8*5 thousand pounds worth of my darlings when I picked †"9['60£ ⅛9[0£']9"†" 9¢ 1¼ £6"380½']"60 8 ⅛62⅞7£ it up. The crook is hollow; and if you press it and 8† [⅛ †"8 2"99⅞ 8' "9339] 60£ 8¢ ¼9[⅛"9"' 8† 60£ turn it slightly to the left, and then raise it, you †["0 8† '38½"†3¼ †9 †"1 32¢† 60£ †"30 "68'4 8† ¼9[will find the opening that will shew you the]833 ¢80£ †"5 9⅛6080½ †"6†]833 '"7] ¼9[†"8

little, long snakey bag, which is my best and biggest 38††39 390½ '06⅞1¼ ⅜6½]"82" 8' 1¼ ⅜2'† 60£ ⅜8½½3'† darlings' bed.
£6"380½' ⅜4£

The only man who will ever guess at this is James †"5 903¼ 160]"9]833 6*7" ½[8'' 6† †"8' 8' ⅝619' Linnegan. Beware of him; he is dangerous, and to be 380016̸0 ⅜2]6"3 9¢ "81 "4 8' £60⅕5"9[' 60£ †9 ⅜6 feared.
¢76"8£

SIMEON HOADLEY.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SEARCH AT CLERGY-STREET

MARION'S first sensation on reading the paper, and learning that her father had left her a fortune, was one of complete bewilderment. She scarcely believed that it could be true. She read the cipher over several times, and tried to think what it all meant to her. She was rich beyond her wildest dreams.

She recalled how she had schemed and worked in the past, within the last few days indeed, to save even a few pounds with which to start the little typewriting business she had projected, and she remembered the pleasure it had given to dream of making two or three pounds a week. And now, here were thousands within her grasp.

Her poor father; how he must have scraped, and saved, and pinched, and hoarded, to make such a fortune—a fortune that had cost him his life! Would it be fatal to her, she wondered.

This led her off into vague, wild, happy dreams of her future life. She of all girls in the world to become suddenly and unexpectedly wealthy; to know no more the trouble and anxiety of making money; to have to learn only how to spend it!

No wonder that Linnegan, if he knew of this, was eager and mad to find it; that he had followed her father's

furniture in the wild desire of getting it; that he was anxious to rent the old house where it had so long been hidden.

And this thought led to one that made her infinitely sad. Had Ralph known of this? Was he searching for it when she saw him at Clergy-street? Had he known of this when her father was alive; and had he—but she shuddered, and would not let the further thought take shape in her mind.

Was there a curse with the fortune? It had killed her father; was it to rob her of her lover? She had been poor in all save the wealth of her love for Ralph and his love for her? Was she now to be rich in all but that?

These thoughts chased one another through her mind, and made her almost hysterical, first with pleasure and then with pain; and she laid her head on her hands, and for the first time since her father's death she shed tears from causes other than her grief and regret at the loss of him.

Suddenly she started up from the table and dressed with feverish haste to go out.

She might lose it all, even at the moment of learning of its existence; and she turned pale at the thought that all these things were lying in the house at Clergy-street, at the mercy of anyone who chose to enter the place, which was not even securely fastened.

As she was putting on her hat, with deft but trembling fingers, she uttered a little cry and ran across the room to a corner in which her eyes caught sight of her father's old walking-stick. She was almost too agitated to be able to understand the directions given in the cipher. It was

a very thick staff of blackthorn, and the crook was disproportionately large, and very much knotted and gnarled. She tried for some time, without success, to open it, pressing it in all ways but the right one; and a sickening feeling of disappointment began to come over her, as she feared that the paper was not correct.

Unexpectedly, she gave the right pressure, however, and then she saw the end of a dirty greasy piece of wash-leather. She pulled this out, and the length of it surprised her. She opened it with fingers that twitched and quivered with excitement, and then gave a half-gasp, half-cry of excessive wonder and admiration, as she caught sight of a number of magnificent brilliants of the purest lustre, which were roughly fastened to the leather.

She carried them to the window, and gazed at them with positive rapture.

Then a feverish impatience overcame her once more, to get to Clergy-street and find the rest of her fortune: and she wondered where she could put the stones for safety, forgetting that they had rested with perfect security in the old stick for many days. She had begun to fear that other people might know the secret of their hiding-place, and she was afraid to trust them in it again. But she overcame this fear, and put them back in their resting-place; and then satisfied herself, by hiding the stick under the mattrass of her bed. This done, she left the house hurriedly.

A cab was passing the end of the street and she jumped into it, telling the man to drive very fast to the Angel; and she sat with a beating heart and a nervous dread that she might even now be too late. She paid the man

liberally and walked as quickly as she could in the direction of Clergy-street.

When she reached the street, she reflected that it was extremely probable that she would be watched, and though this feeling made her now very much afraid, she so far controlled herself as to walk down the street at a leisurely pace.

Anxious as she was to secure the jewels and money, she was, nevertheless, almost afraid to enter the house. She feared lest there might be someone already in it; and she stood for a moment on the doorstep, irresolute; undecided whether she ought not to fetch help. But she put the fear away, and opened the door and entered. Purposely, she made a considerable noise in opening the door, as she thought that if any one was in the house, the sound might frighten them out of it.

She closed the door behind her, and then went boldly into what had been her father's room. It was empty, and did not appear to have been disturbed in any way since she had left the house in the morning.

Her next act was to go to the back of the house and fasten the window by which an entry had been made on the previous night, and lock the door which led from the kitchen to the passage.

The light outside was beginning to fade, and though the afternoon had been bright and sunny, the room was gloomy and sombre, owing to the thick, dirty blind that covered the window.

She would not want too much light, she thought, and hoped to get through her task quickly.

There were five hiding places she had to find—the bar

of the grate, the inkstand, the double-fold of the carpet, the secret opening in the bureau, and the hole in the floor.

She began the search immediately, and going to the fireplace, tried to wrench the bar of the grate away from it fastenings. She shook it, pressed it first one way and then another, lifted it, pushed it down, but could not do more than shake it very slightly; then, just as with the stick, she opened it by accident. She gave it a turn without thinking what she was doing, and it came away easily. It was hollow, and she pulled out of it a thin roll of wash-leather as long as the bar itself. She could feel the stones in this, and without staying to examine them, she shook the tube to satisfy herself that it was empty, and then replaced it roughly in the grate. The roll of stones she put away in a small hand-bag she had brought with her.

The carpet had not been laid down, but was rolled up in a heap under the window. Marion did not know which of the corners had been by "the cupboard," as the cipher described, but she unrolled it as hastily as possible, and felt and examined each corner. One end of it had been doubled and sewn, as if the carpet had been too long for the room. The girl ripped up the seam, and found a place at one of the corners where a small patch had been clumsily sewn on to the other side, and on getting this away, another washleather bag was brought to light. Marion took this, and then unripped the opposite corner, but finding nothing, rolled the carpet back again under the window.

The inkstand had been placed in one of the drawers. It was a common zinc circular inkstand, with a large flat

bottom. She decided to take this away with her; and as it was too large to go in her bag, she beat the flat portion of it with the poker until she had bent it up round the well, when she was able to squeeze it into the bag.

In searching for the parchment deed in which the bank notes were hidden, Marion was much puzzled. Several of the deeds were endorsed with the word "canceled," and she felt that she dared not give as much time as would be necessary to split the skins of all of them; moreover she had no means at hand of doing this. She decided, therefore, to take away all the deeds that were thus endorsed; and as there was no room for them in her bag, she resolved to wrap them round her body, an expedient that was comparatively easy, as she was wearing a very loosely-fitting dress.

Then she turned to the bureau. She had worked so hard that she was by this time quite hot, while the filth and dust had made her exceedingly dirty. The bureau was an old, shabby, dingy-looking thing, and seemed almost tumbling to pieces. At first she could not move the claw ornament, mentioned in the cipher, and as she was getting more and more anxious to leave the house, and her fear of disturbance was growing fast with the lapse of time and the increase in the number and value of her discoveries, she began to get impatient. Moreover, the light was fading fast, and she could only see with difficulty.

She took the poker and with one or two very vigorous blows knocked off a part of the ornament; and then pulled, and pushed, and tugged, and twisted at the remainder until her fingers, which the work with the carpet

had made sore, were scratched and bleeding, and her nails were broken. She could not find the place, however, and as she felt she dared not leave the bureau with such a clue as the broken bracket might afford, she grew desperate, and regardless of any noise she might make, she battered and split the wood with the violent blows with the poker. Presently she found traces of a curious wedge-shaped fastening, by which the ornament had been kept in its place, and she was able to get it all away.

The hiding-place was so cunningly devised, however, that when she had done that there was nothing to be seen except a flat surface of wood; tapping at this she thought she could detect a hollow sound, and she attacked this spot with sharp, hard blows with the end of the poker, and in a short time noticed with great satisfaction that the surface of the wood began to splinter. This encouraged her greatly, and getting the point of the poker into one of the cracks, she worked it as a lever, and almost directly saw part of the end of the thin tin case mentioned. In another minute, she could see the whole of it; it fitted into a deep slit, like a thin slab of wood, and stood on its side. There was a small ring in the end to enable it to be pulled out, and Marion breathed a sigh of relief as she caught hold of the ring and drew it toward her.

Just as she did this, a loud knocking at the front door of the house made her start and turn round in alarm, and the case in her hand came open, and one or two of the stones fell on the floor.

She searched for these hurriedly, placed them in the case, and put that into her hand-bag. Then she gathered the pieces of wood which she had knocked off the bureau,

and threw them up the chimney, and hung some paper over the part that she had damaged.

She had finished her work; and was very hot and flushed with exertion; but felt a glow of triumph at having succeeded. She grasped the bag firmly in her hand, and went to open the door.

As she turned to do this, the knocking was repeated; and this time it was even louder and longer than before.

CHAPTER XIX

A RACE FOR WEALTH

MARION hesitated before opening the door, and, for a moment, was undecided whether to do so, or to attempt to get away from the house in the same manner as she had left it in the morning. But reflection convinced her that to do anything of the kind would be very unwise; for the reason, that if she were caught, she would undoubtedly bring suspicion upon herself.

She went to the door therefore boldly, and threw it wide open. To her relief, it was only Mrs. Bloxam.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Jannaway, is it?" said the woman, stepping into the house as soon as the door was opened, and staring hard at the flushed face and dusty and dirty appearance of the girl. "I happened to be calling on a neighbor here, and they told me there was some one in the house, so I thought I had better come and see who it was. I was told you had put some furniture in the place again, and were coming here yourself after a bit, to live here."

"Yes, I had an intention of doing that, Mrs. Bloxam," answered Marion, standing in front of the woman to prevent her entering the house further, and keeping the door open.

"Well, I hope you've altered it then," replied Mrs.

Bloxam, rather insolently. "I claim the home as mine, and my lawyer tells me that it is mine; besides, you promised it to me."

"No, I did not promise it to you, Mrs. Bloxam," answered Marion firmly. "I said that I would consider the matter, and see what my solicitor said. I wish to do what is just, however, and I am willing that you should have it, for your life-time, for your own use. But I cannot give it to you altogether; as my father wished me not to part with it. But you can live here if you like, providing that you pay a nominal sum for rent,—say, a shilling a year; my solicitor tells me that is necessary."

"Thank you Miss Jannaway," answered the woman with an oily servility, that contrasted strongly with her previous tone, "May I stop now? I have nowhere to sleep now."

"I would rather you did not sleep here to-night," answered Marion, as calmly as if she were discussing a matter of business, "as I have one or two things—the safe and a few papers chiefly—that I am going to remove. The rest of the things I will leave here, if you wish; and if you will go to Mr. Price and sign an agreement you can have possession to-morrow."

"Thank you," said the woman, again; but now some suspicion appeared to have taken possession of her and she looked very closely at the girl's dusty dress and dirty face and hands. "You seem to have been routing the things about," she said.

"Yes, I have a little. There was a paper I wanted to find," said Marion, "and I am sorry to say that the house seems to have been broken into, and more than one thing

has been smashed. But I must go now," she added, as a hint to the other to let her close the door. Mrs. Bloxam took no notice of the hint and stood quite still.

It was getting dark very fast, and as a slight mist was beginning to gather, Marion was unwilling to remain in the place a moment longer than necessary, with so much valuable property in her possession.

"Would you mind my stopping now to put things a bit to rights?" asked Mrs. Bloxam.

"I should prefer your doing it to-morrow," answered Marion.

"Ah, but I'd rather do it to-night," was the reply, insolently spoken. "You see the place ain't safe to be left, if people can come breaking in at all hours of the day and night. They won't break in if I'm here you may be sure enough. I'll look after that."

"Well, I have told you that you can have possession to-morrow," said Marion.

"Then I'll tell you that I mean to keep possession now," returned Mrs. Bloxam, pushing her way past Marion as she spoke.

Marion was not at all sorry, as this left the way clear for her to get into the street, without the other seeing the bag that she had held in her hand concealed by her dress.

"I cannot prevent you now, of course," she said, turning round as she went out of the door; "but if this conduct should make me alter my intention you need not be surprised."

"Oh, go away, and do your best or do your worst, for all I care," answered Mrs. Bloxam, with a laugh. "I've

got possession, and mean to keep it. I'm inside, and I shall stop in; and you're out, and can stop out," and with these words she burst out laughing, and slammed the door in Marion's face.

The girl walked away at once, at a very quick pace, glad to have escaped without more difficulty. She looked sharply about her as she went rapidly along the street, but nothing occurred to cause her any uneasiness; and as soon as she could see a cab, she hailed it, and was driven quickly away in the direction of Morris-place.

When she reached home she found there a letter in pencil from Ralph. She had forgotten all about him in the excitement of finding the jewels. The letter was short.

"My Dearest—I came here to see you the moment I reached the office, and have waited an hour. I cannot wait a minute longer. I have to leave town to-night on business for the firm, and must get back now before the principal leaves the office. What is your fresh trouble? I am very anxious. I will write you immediately. I can give you an address. I am very anxious about you and other matters. Some day I will tell you all. It is very terrible, and a sad disgrace, if I cannot avert it; and escape from it seems to grow more doubtful and difficult every day. I should have told you to-day, I think, if I could have seen you. God bless you, my dearest one. Your love is my greatest blessing, now and always.—

Ralph."

Marion nearly cried with vexation and disappointment, as she read the letter, at having missed Ralph, and thus

lost the opportunity of having all the mystery explained. And the letter, instead of helping to explain it, increased the confusion. Then she grew irritable and angry, for her nerves were giving way owing to want of rest, combined with the stress and strain of prolonged excitement and anxiety.

She dashed the letter down on the table, and stamped her foot, and cried out that it was a shame of Ralph to leave her at such a critical time, forgetting, in her temper, that he could know nothing of the worry that was driving her nearly mad, and that he was but doing his duty for his employers.

Her temper left her as suddenly as it had come, and the tears rushed into her eyes, and she picked up the letter and kissed it over and over again, in a passion of love. The man was very, very dear to her, and the knowledge that he was in trouble went to her heart and wounded her grievously. She longed to be able to go to him, and comfort him with kisses, and sympathy, and love, and show how true she was.

The passion passed away soon, however, and she grew cool again, and then put away the letter, and set to work to examine the treasures she had brought from Clergy-street.

First she took out the old, battered, dirty zinc ink-stand, and carrying it into her bedroom, washed it out very carefully in the hand-basin. In the china cup she found nothing; but in the interior of the large zinc well, she could feel a number of hard lumps of various sizes, embedded in the coagulated ink at the bottom. She moistened the whole of this with warm water, and when she

had washed it all out and had freed the little lumps from the ink with which they were densely coated, they turned out to be a number of exceedingly fine and beautiful emeralds; there were eleven of them in all, and even Marion, who knew little or nothing of the value of precious stones, judged by their size and brilliance that they must be worth a large sum of money.

She opened next the tin case; it was about an inch in thickness or a little less, and some six to eight inches in length by four or five in width. It was full of stones of different sizes; diamonds and emeralds, all placed carefully between layers of wash-leather. She took some of them out of the box and gazed at them closely and admiringly.

While she was admiring them in this way, someone knocked at the front door; and before she went to see who it was, she put all the stones away, and hid the bag. Then she locked the door of her room, and went to open the front door.

It was Mrs. Bloxam again.

"You're a clever girl, ain't you?" said the woman, as soon as she saw Marion. "Perhaps, a bit too clever, you know."

"What do you mean, and what do you want?" asked Marion, firmly and with some warmth.

"You'll know that before I leave, or my name isn't Martha Bloxam. What have you been up to at Clergy-street, to-day, I should like to know?"

"I owe no account of my actions to you or to anyone else," answered Marion, spiritedly. "Please go away."

"No, and I shan't go away, neither," answered Mrs.

Bloxam, insolently; she had been drinking. "I shan't go away, and what's more, you won't make me, so there. And it's no sort of good your coming your hoity-toity over me."

"If you don't go away, I shall have you removed by the police," was Marion's answer to this.

"Oh, no, you won't," replied the woman, with a laugh. "Oh, no, you won't. I've got no call to quarrel with you, don't you see, unless, you force me to it. And it won't pay you; you know that very well. I know too much, so you'd better go square with me. I know a bit too much about your old father's doings, you know; a precious old father he was, too," and she laughed again.

"I neither know or care what you know. I tell you again, if you don't go away I will have you removed by the police," said Marion.

"Do it. Do it, if you dare," answered the other, putting her face close to Marion as she spoke. "Do it, you young, ungrateful, good-for-nothing chit. Do it, I say. Here, perhaps you don't know what this is and where it came from; and how it was I came to find it on the floor after you'd left the house just now with all the rest of them," and Mrs. Bloxam held out a small emerald in the palm of her hand as she spoke. "I suppose you dropped it while you were smashing the old writing desk, eh? Ha, you know now, don't you?" she cried, seeing the girl start at her words.

"If you have found that stone in Clergy-street it belongs to me, and you had better give it to me. If you do not I shall charge you with stealing it," said Marion, with much cool determination in her voice and manner.

"Charge me with stealing?" exclaimed the woman in a loud, shrill voice of anger. "Charge me? You'd better, that's all." Then with a short, angry laugh—"Try it. If either of us is a thief it's not me, I can tell you; sneaking round into houses given to other people, and breaking open their furniture, and stealing property left by dead men to others. That's what I call stealing, I do. But it won't do you no good, so don't you think it, my girl. I know a thing or two too much for you. So you'd better give up what don't belong to you; do you hear?"

"I am waiting for a constable," said Marion, coolly.

"Then, I've a jolly good mind he should have something to take me for. For two pins I'd scratch your eyes out, you young cat, and change that sneering self-satisfied look on your face."

"Ah!" cried Marion, gladly, as she saw Mr. Peters, the lodger, coming along the street. "Now, Mrs. Bloxam, are you going, or must I hand you over to the police? Good evening, Mr. Peters. Will you stay here a moment? Now, are you going?" she said, sharply turning again to Mrs. Bloxam.

The latter glared sullenly and angrily at Mr. Peters as he entered the house, and then threateningly at Marion.

"You think you've won this time, don't you?" she growled out, as she went away; "and that you've got everything nice and safe. But don't you make too sure, that's all. 'Tain't always so easy to keep as it is to find."

Marion shut the door, and she explained to Mr. Peters that the woman had insulted her, and laughed at the incident as if it was a trivial one.

But she was frightened. She feared that Mrs. Bloxam guessed that she had brought away from Clergy-street all that was valuable, and for aught Marion knew the woman might be in league with plenty of men desperate enough to make a great fight for such a fortune as she had now in her possession.

She dared not keep it in the house a single night—nay, even a few hours might bring some ruffians upon her.

Yet where could she take it?

Ralph was away. Mr. Price would have left his office by this time, and she did not know his private address. She might go to the police; but such an act might result in many questions being asked which she did not wish to answer. She thought of Ezra Gibeon, but was afraid to trust so large an amount with him. Then she remembered Mr. Fawcett's offer to be of assistance. Of course, the bank was the first place she ought to have thought of.

How was she to take it? She recognized that the venture would be one of some danger if she were followed at once. She decided, consequently, to conceal the jewels about her person, and carry her handbag. She slipped off her dress, and with a few rapid stitches sewed the washleather cases in different parts of the lining. The tin case she put down her back inside her stays, and was about to start, when she remembered the large jewels in the old walking stick. She took out the long, slender washleather case, and tucked it neatly in the fold of the small turban hat she wore, and fastened it with a stitch or two.

Then, as an extra precaution, she went upstairs to ask Mr. Peters to go with her; but the doors of the rooms

were shut and locked, and both he and his wife were out. Marion shuddered as she ran down the stairs at the thought that she was alone in the house, and she hastened to get out.

The evening was cold and misty, and she could not see very far through the fog, though she cast searching glances in all directions.

Whether anyone was following her or not she could not say, but she felt as if every step she took was being photographed, and as if all who passed were saying to themselves.

"That girl has many thousand pounds worth of jewels on her."

She tried to appear unconcerned, and to act as if she had only come out on some trivial cause. With this object she did not even take a cab, but waited for a tramcar. Directly after she had entered it, a man got in and sat down nearly opposite to her. She fancied immediately, that he was watching her.

Her eyes were attracted to his face, and there was something in his looks which seemed familiar to her. After a time, she saw it was the expression of the small closely set eyes. Though the man was wearing a pointed beard and moustache, she thought she could recognize James Linnegan; and this idea frightened her beyond measure.

Presently, he bent across to speak to her, asking if the car was going to the Angel, and speaking with a foreign accent.

"Yes," said Marion. "You will be there in a few minutes," and with that she rose and got out.

She watched the car as far as possible when to her dismay, she saw the man get out immediately afterwards, and look in her direction.

A cab was passing and she hailed it, and got in, telling the man to drive fast to the bank, giving him the address. It was a four-wheel cab with a horse that could go fast, and the driver whipped up the animal till they were traveling at a really quick speed, and Marion began to breathe a little more freely again.

The cab went at a capital pace past Highbury Station, and Marion was glad to find that the man meant to keep to the main street. She felt safer when she knew plenty of people were about, although in the mist she could scarcely see the persons on the pavement.

Suddenly, the cab stopped with a jerk that nearly threw the girl forward onto the front seat. She looked out in alarm for the cause, and found that a timber cart with long logs on it, was crossing the street.

She sat down, feeling irritated at the interruption, and watched the cart as it moved slowly across the road.

Then, just as the cab began to move on again, the door was quickly opened, and as quickly closed behind a man, who sprang into the cab by the side of the frightened girl.

It was the man she had seen in the tramcar, and before she could call out he had drawn a revolver, and held it against her head.

"Utter a sound," he said, in a deep, gruff voice, which she recognized in an instant as that of James Linnegan, "and I'll let daylight into your head. I want those jewels that you have."

CHAPTER XX

£30,000

MARION was very frightened and felt more inclined to faint than ever before in her life. She sat quite still and fought against her faintness, and then said, without turning her head.

"I will promise not to cry out, if you will take that pistol away," and her lips and voice trembled as she said the words.

"If you utter a sound, I'll shoot you, mind that," said the man, as he lowered the revolver. "Now give me those jewels."

"No, I won't," said Marion, firmly. "If you kill me, you won't get them, because the noise of your shot will bring the police upon you."

"You cunning devil," growled the man, angrily. "I will have them if I swing for it. Give them up, I say," and as he spoke he laid his hand on the bag.

In an instant the girl saw how she might deceive him.

"I will never give them up," she cried, and clutched the bag with great appearance of resolution.

"Give them here," growled the man, "or by ——— I'll make you."

Then, as the cab drove rapidly through the misty street, a short, sharp, struggle took place between the

two, for the possession of the bag, which Marion only released after as much resistance as she thought would convince the man she was struggling in earnest to prevent his getting it. When, at length, she let him take it, she uttered a low moaning cry, as if of anguish, and sank back in the cab covering her face with both her hands, as though she were overcome with grief.

She watched him between her fingers, and saw him try to open the bag. Fortunately it was locked, and as the cab was now in a narrow part of the street where its progress was slow and people might be easily attracted by any signs of disturbance, he did not stop to force away the fastenings of the bag; but opening the door of the cab on the off side, sprang out and disappeared in the mist.

Marion closed the door carefully, overjoyed at having outwitted the man and thus escaped from so dangerous a situation. After the cab had gone another hundred yards or so, and they were passing a rank, she thought it would be safer to change cabs, lest the man should discover that there was nothing worth having in the bag and come after her. She stopped the cabman, therefore, paid him well, and jumped instantly into a hansom, promising the driver a double fare if he could put her at the bank door in five minutes. The man lashed his horse, and they started at a fast canter, just as Marion saw a man run up to the cab rank, and call loudly to the driver of the vehicle which she had just left.

They rattled along at a great speed, and Marion's spirits rose quickly as they neared the bank, but just as they were descending the hill in the St. John's-street road,

the horse put his foot on a stone, and went down. The vehicle lurched dangerously, and Marion was tossed from one side to the other and then forwards, almost out of the cab.

She recovered herself as quickly as possible, and jumped out of the cab telling the man to come on to the bank for his fare. Then she ran on as fast as she could, for the short distance that she was from the bank.

She had gone scarcely twenty yards, however, when someone came up by her side, silently and swiftly, and seized her by the wrist.

It was the man, Linnegan, again.

"You don't trick me, again," he said, in a thick, gruff voice. "Just come with me!"

"Help!" cried Marion, instantly, in loud, lusty tones, glancing round in all directions. "Help! Help!"

"Hullo, what's this?" cried two or three men, who came round in a moment. To Marion's dismay they seemed to recognize Linnegan; and after he had said a few words to them, they closed round him and Marion, and began to sing and laugh very loudly, in order to drown Marion's cries.

"If you are men, you will help me," cried the girl, struggling violently with Linnegan, who held her as in a vice. The men laughed in response to the appeal, and they all began to move away together.

This action made Marion thoroughly desperate, and with a sudden violent effort, she succeeded in breaking away from the man who held her, and dashed at a rapid pace in the direction of the bank. The men followed and soon overtook her, but not until the girl's cries had at-

tracted the attention of other people in the street. Amongst them to Marion's intense relief, was a policeman, and at the sight of his helmet and uniform, the men left her, growling out many oaths in their disappointment and chagrin.

She told the constable that an attempt had been made to rob her, and asked him to walk with her to the bank. He did this, and it was with a great feeling of gladness and thankfulness that she found herself safely inside the door of the bank manager's house.

Mr. Fawcett came to her at once, and led her into a room where his wife was sitting. Marion was quite exhausted and too much overcome to speak; and they gave her some wine and let her remain quiet for awhile, until she had recovered sufficiently to be able to tell the story of the desperate attempts made to rob her, and of the exciting manner in which she had been chased and had escaped.

Then she told of the discovery of her father's jewels; how she had puzzled out the cipher by herself, owing to her knowledge of type-writing; had gone to Clergy-street and found the jewels; and all that had happened during that most eventful day.

Both her hearers listened with deepest interest, the bank manager particularly paying the greatest heed to the account of the splendor and value of the jewels. He entered heartily into the girl's plans, and when she took the long, thin roll from her hat and showed him the magnificent brilliants, laying out the large stones on the table, he was profoundly moved. He was glad enough to have so rich a customer for the bank.

"They are gorgeous stones," he said, taking them up one by one, and scrutinising them minutely. "And you say they are perfectly pure white, and without a flaw?"

"So far as I could judge," answered Marion.

"Then each stone must be worth some hundreds of pounds," was the reply. "I am not an expert in such things and could not give precisely their full value, but I know something of them, and a stone this size"—picking up one of them—"must be worth at least from five to seven hundred pounds. Where are the rest?" he asked.

"I have concealed them in my dress," answered Marion, with a little blush.

"Good. You are as shrewd as brave, Miss Jannaway," said Mr. Fawcett, smiling. "If you will go with Mrs. Fawcett you can get them and bring them here and we will examine them all. Fanny, will you take Miss Jannaway to your room?"

While they were away, the manager amused himself in speculating as to how old Simeon Hoadley had accumulated such wealth—a matter that he thought would hardly pay for inquiry—and how much to his own advantage to have the management of the investment of the money. If the girl was in any way right, there must be a good many thousands of pounds. Altogether the girl had really become a very desirable acquaintance.

The display of the jewels when Marion had laid them all out on the table, almost took Mr. Fawcett's breath away. Not only were there many more stones than he had expected, but the size and quality of them astonished him. He took quite a pleasure in sorting them according

to their different sizes, and while he was doing this he seemed almost fascinated by them. He went through them all carefully, weighed many of them, and estimated in a rough general way their value, jotting down the figures as he made the calculations. The total far exceeded any sum that had been in Marion's thoughts.

"If we are at all accurate in believing the stones pure and without flaws, the value is very great, Miss Jannaway, very great indeed. Of course you must understand that a flaw in a stone will cut away as much as nineteen-twentieths of its value; so will a tint in the case of a brilliant. I cannot see them sufficiently clearly by the gaslight to determine this. But if they are pure and flawless, there cannot be less than twenty thousand pounds worth of jewels lying on the table."

"Good gracious me, Robert, is that so?" cried his wife, while Marion could say nothing for the moment. Then she laid her hand on the parchment.

"There is something more here," she said. "There should be from seven to eight thousand pounds in bank notes."

"What, in those dirty old papers?" cried Mrs. Fawcett.

"Yes in these dirty papers. It is a curious treasure house, isn't it," said Marion, smiling. And then she read the clause in the cipher which described the hiding of the notes.

"We must search for those at once," said the bank manager, eagerly. "But first let us do these stones up in a workman-like way. It ought to be a labor of love to make them comfortable," he added, with a smile.

Mr. Fawcett replaced them in the washleather bags, and made a list of the contents of each, putting down the number and character of the stones in the different bags, and calling Marion to notice everything that he did. Then he made a parcel of them all, and fastened it securely, and sealed it in several places.

"I will give you a receipt for the stones," he said, "and will place them in our strong room downstairs. They'll be safe there and in very respectable company. Now, let us see about these notes."

"They are in the largest and dirtiest packet," said Marion. "This is certainly the dirtiest," she added, pointing to one that was almost black with dust and ink marks, "and I should think the largest."

"We can easily see about the size," replied Mr. Fawcett, "by comparing them. I should think that is the deed. Oh, yes, look here where the skin is wrinkled, and the air has got between and caused some blisters. Ah, here at the edge are the signs where the two skins have been joined. We had better steam it or damp it, perhaps." He rang and told the servant to bring some hot water, and, while she was gone for it, he tried to separate the skins with a sharp, thin knife. He was not successful with this, however, but found when he had thoroughly damped and steamed the skins, they came apart easily.

They had guessed correctly the deed on which to operate, and when the skins had been divided, the notes were found between. They lay in three rows, and at first it appeared as if there were only nine notes in all: but the notes lay two together, and had been carefully and cleverly kept in position with the gummed edging of stamps,

while between the rows the parchment had been fastened down with the gum, some very strong gum which had kept the edges together.

When they counted the notes there were eighteen, not fifteen, as stated in the cipher; and as each was of the value of £500, the dirty old parchment had been worth no less than nine thousand pounds.

Thus if the value of the jewels were correctly put at £20,000, Marion's fortune with the £1,000 already in the bank, was £30,000, besides the two houses in Clergy-street and Morris-place. It was no wonder that the bank manager wished to be polite to her.

"You are nervous and worn out, Miss Jannaway," he said, after he had given her the receipt for the money. "Will you sleep here to-night? You may feel safer than in the house at Morris-place.

"I thank you very much; I was going to ask you if you knew where I could sleep with safety," said Marion. "I think my nerves have had rather too severe a trial and I want a long rest, where I feel I shall be safe."

"That is good," answered Mr. Fawcett. "You shall have such a rest here, if you like to stay a few days until your matters are a little more settled, we will do our best to make you comfortable. And now, Fanny, if you can get some supper at once, Miss Jannaway will be glad to go to bed very early, I am sure. Would you like to come down with me into the cellars and see where your fortune is going to stay for the night. You may make your mind easy now, however, as if anyone took it away to-night, we should be the losers and not you."

Though Marion was very jaded and worn out, the

sense of security revived her spirits, and she laughed and chatted pleasantly, as Mr. Fawcett explained the many and ingenious precautions taken to ensure safety for the contents of the strong rooms; and when the three were at supper, both the manager and his wife were surprised at the girl's conversation, and attracted by her truthful and ingenuous disposition.

When she went to bed and was alone, some of the old uneasiness took possession of her again; and she found it difficult to realize that she and her fortune were both safe. Tired as she was, her sleep was at first broken and disturbed by dreams, suggested by the trying experiences of the last two days. More than once she started up, fancying she heard a noise of someone breaking into her room, and that the jewels had been stolen again; and in several of the dreams, she was chasing, or being chased by, either the man James Linnegan, or her lover Ralph Gething.

But she slept very soundly at last, and awoke refreshed and invigorated, and with but one thought that troubled her seriously.

Now that other matters were arranged, her mind went back with great force to the problem of her lover's conduct. There could be no happiness for her she felt, until that was explained.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ARREST OF LINNEGAN

THAT morning it was definitely arranged that Marion should stay for a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett, and the girl was glad to be saved from the necessity of being so much alone.

She did not, however, confide to either the manager or his wife the difficulties that embarrassed her in regard to all that she had seen at Clergy-street. She felt that until she had had an explanation with Ralph she must bear the burden of silence.

She had now certain clues in her hands which ought to enable her to clear up the mystery concerning her father's death, and she had no doubt that they would do so, as soon as she could tell everything to the police. Ralph's absence at such a time made her uncomfortable and fretful, and her first act was to go to his house for some tidings of him.

Mrs. Gething received her very kindly, and was glad to notice some improvement in her looks; but she had nothing to tell which Marion did not already know.

"He came home in a great hurry yesterday afternoon, and told me he had been to Morris-place, but had missed you," said Mrs. Gething, "and asked me to put one or two things into a bag for him as he was going away on

business for the firm. I think he said it was a commission to get some evidence, or something of that sort, but I'm not sure. Anyway, he didn't tell me where he was going, but said he would write or wire me. I can't make out what's come to him lately," added Mrs. Gething, in a troubled way, "he has always been so regular. I'm sure I don't know what it is," and she sighed.

"Did he say where he had been since Saturday, Mrs. Gething?" asked Marion.

"No, my dear, that he didn't; and I was so flurried by his being in such haste that I never thought to ask him. He wasn't in the house more than a few minutes altogether."

"I have seen a change in him," said Marion, thoughtfully and rather sadly. She sat some time with Mrs. Gething, talking about Ralph, and when she rose to go, asked Mrs. Gething to be sure and let her know the moment any news came from Ralph.

They had been sitting in a room which Ralph used often as a kind of study, when he was at home in the evenings, and as Marion passed the fire-place something lying under a glass shade of a Parian figure, on the mantle-shelf, attracted her attention and made her turn pale and cold.

It was a fish-shaped pencil-case, of mother-of-pearl, precisely similar to that which she had seen in her father's possession. She stood still for a moment and rested her hand for a moment against the mantel to steady herself.

"That is—is a pretty thing, Mrs. Gething," she said slowly and with difficulty. "May I look at it?" Her voice trembled a little and sounded rather hoarse.

"That is Ralph's; at least it is now," answered Mrs. Gething. "We lost it a long time ago, and Ralph found it again quite recently—within the last few days indeed—and brought it home. You are right, it *is* a very pretty thing." As she spoke she took it from under the shade and handed it to Marion.

The girl took it without speaking, and held it to the light. Her hand was trembling very much as she turned it over to find the place where she had scratched her initials. They were there, just as she had scratched them on the tail of the fish; and when she saw them she turned faint with an awful fear such as she had never before known. Her knees seemed to give way under her, and she had to sit down.

"What's the matter, my dear?" said Mrs. Gething, noticing the change in her companion's looks.

"It's nothing, Mrs. Gething, thank you, but I—I have had one or two touches of faintness lately. I shall be quite right in a moment." Her voice was weak as she answered, and she laid the little ornament down on the table.

"Marion, it's my opinion that you're not at all well," said Mrs. Gething, in a serious, motherly way. "I noticed, yesterday morning, that you were pale and worn, and quite unlike yourself, and here you are to-day nearly fainting. I shall insist on your having a glass of wine or a little brandy," and Mrs. Gething, not suspecting in the least what was the real cause of the change in Marion, hurried out of the room to get the wine.

When she was gone, the girl picked up the ornament, and looked again at the damning evidence of the tiny

letters—" M. J."—and then her hand fell listlessly on her lap, and she gazed vacantly out of the window, with a heavy, aching heart, wondering how Ralph had found, what her father himself, in the cipher, had said would " lead to the detection of the thief and murderer."

The wine revived her sufficiently to enable her to assure Mrs. Gething that she was better. She wanted to be alone in the open air, and she walked for some distance through the streets fretting and worrying, and trying to think of some solution of this new and mysterious complication in the great puzzle.

She could not prevent herself from giving way to some doubts of Ralph—doubts that nearly maddened her as she fought loyally, but vainly against them.

After a time, she went round to Morris-place, and what she saw made her profoundly thankful that she had not slept there on the previous night. The house had been broken into, and, although neither Mr. Peters nor his wife had heard anything, Marion's rooms had been thoroughly ransacked. Everything had been over-hauled, cupboards had been emptied, the contents of drawers turned out on to the floor; boxes broken open and their contents strewn about the place; the bedding had been ripped open, and even the flooring taken up in places. It was evident that a most determined search of the whole premises had been made; and Marion shuddered as she thought of all that might have happened to her, if she had remained in the house. She resolved then, that on no consideration would she live there again alone.

After she had given notice of the robbery to the police, she went to Mr. Price, who listened to all she had to tell

him with the greatest astonishment, mingled with admiration for the pluck and shrewdness which Marion had displayed throughout. But he agreed that the girl must not venture to live alone, at any rate for a time.

"It is evident, Miss Jannaway," he said, "that this Linnegan is a most determined and desperate man. Baffled as he has been by you, he is just the man to conceive a great hatred for you, and a desire for what he would think is revenge. Until he is in custody, therefore, you must take great precautions. I don't mean to say that you are in any danger," he said, thinking his former words might frighten Marion, "but you must be cautious. I should avoid going out at night for a time, if I were you, certainly, when you are alone: and you must be very careful. Rich young ladies, you know," he added, with a smile, "owe it to others as well as to themselves to be careful. How would it be if you were to go out of London for a time?"

"No, I cannot do that yet," answered Marion, thinking of the complication about Ralph Gething. "Not, at any rate, until this man, Linnegan, has been captured."

"That won't be long now—not many days, you may depend," replied the lawyer, "seeing the new clues that you have. These two ornaments that are mentioned in the cipher ought by themselves to put the rope round his neck. You may depend upon it, he has them; and took them when that sum of gold was carried off from Clergy-street."

These words made Marion very uncomfortable.

"Do you think the possession of them would be taken as a proof of his guilt, then?" she asked.

"Do I think the sun will rise to-morrow?" was the lawyer's reply; and Marion went cold at the words.

"And what of Mrs. Bloxam?" she said rising.

"You may leave me to deal with her," was the significant reply, as they shook hands, and Marion went away, the load of doubt weighing more heavily on her than ever.

All the rest of that day and the next, she brooded constantly over Mr. Price's opinion, and taxed her ingenuity to the utmost to find some plausible reason, consistent with entire innocence, for Ralph's possession of the fish-pencil case.

All she could hope was that her father had parted with it before his death, and that Ralph had been able to buy it. But then, the words of the cipher were clear. The two ornaments had been intended by her father to lead to the detection of the man who should steal from him the gold with which they had been hidden; and her own knowledge of Simeon Hoadley convinced her that it was most unlikely he would ever change such a plan without mentioning that he had done so.

All she could do therefore, was to buoy herself up with as much hope as she could force herself to entertain, while she waited with ever-growing fretful impatience for her lover's return. She went again in the evening to Morris-place and to Ralph's house, to inquire for news of him. But there were no tidings of him on that or the following day, Wednesday; and this unaccountable and unusual conduct aggravated the suspense until it was nearly unbearable.

Thinking that there would most certainly be news

from him on the Thursday, she went in the morning to both places. At Morris-place there was a letter.

She recognized Ralph's handwriting, and tore open the envelope with feverish haste. The letter was quiet and disappointing. It was dated Chichester, Wednesday, and ran as follows—

"My Dearest—I did not write yesterday, as I expected to be back in London; but there has been a delay, and just at this moment, when I was expecting to get back, I have had a wire from the office to go on from here to Plymouth. From there it is not unlikely I may have to go as far as Truro or Penzance, even, and in that case can hardly hope to be in town again until Saturday, or perhaps even Monday. I cannot tell you how it troubles me to be away from you at such a time, but I hope and believe that the result of this journey will do me good with the firm, and in that event it will be for both of us an advantage. I have no time to write, and am uncertain where I may be; but I may perhaps be able to get a letter if you address it to the Post Office, at Plymouth; but even that is not certain, as I shall be there to-morrow by the time you get this, and may have to leave before there would be time for any letter from you to reach there. Try not to be impatient at the delay, though from the extent it distresses me, I know this must be hard. Good-bye. God bless you, my dearest.

"Your loving Ralph."

Marion read the letter very eagerly, and at the last affectionate vows a smile and a slight flush swept over

her face, and she pressed the paper to her lips and kissed it, somewhat impulsively.

It was not the letter of a man who was keeping any bad secrets from her, she thought; her great love for the man making her willing to be easily satisfied. The letter thus made the suspense less trying to bear, and strengthened at once her trust in Ralph, and her hope and belief that he would easily explain everything.

She would have liked to write to him, but it was no use to send a long letter, for it only to lie at the Plymouth Post Office. So she decided to telegraph. The thought of the expense of this—a survival from her old carefulness—occurred to her, and she smiled to herself as she reflected that now she need no longer be so careful in studying such expenses.

Her telegram mentioned the extreme urgency for Ralph to return as soon as possible, hinted at the extraordinary discoveries made in his absence, urged him to write and gave him her present address at Mr. Fawcett's. She left the telegraph office feeling lighter-hearted than she had been for some days; and her thoughts as she walked back to the bank along the Upper-street, were pleasant ones, about Ralph and their great mutual love.

She loitered rather, looking in several of the shop windows. She was just moving away from one of these when with profound astonishment she saw the man, James Linnegan, crossing the road a little way ahead of her.

In a moment her anger rose that he should dare to walk about the streets in this open manner, as if he defied anyone to punish him for all he had done.

Marion overtook him just as he had turned out of the main road and had walked a few paces up a small street. He heard her quick footsteps and turned. He stopped directly he saw who it was.

"Miss Jannaway," he exclaimed, as if in some surprise. "This is fortunate. I have tried to find you once or twice during the last few days, and have called at Morris-place, but each time I was told you were away." He was very respectably dressed again, and his easy, self-possessed, rather nonchalant air increased the girl's anger against him.

"You found me when you wanted me on Monday," she answered pointedly.

"Excuse me, but our meeting was as accidental as this one; or perhaps I should say, you followed me then as apparently you have followed me now," he said coolly.

"I mean on Monday evening, when you followed me in the cab and afterwards in Clerkenwell," returned Marion. "I have a clearer recollection of our meetings than you."

"I have never seen you in a cab in my life, and I have never seen you in Clerkenwell," answered the man, in a bold, confident, unabashed manner. "What is more, I was not near Clerkenwell on Monday; no nearer than you saw me in the morning, that is," he added firmly.

"I wonder you do not say you have never been in Clerkenwell in your life," said Marion, angrily. "It would be as true as what you have just said."

The man bowed.

"It is not of much use, perhaps, for me to tell you that

you are completely mistaken. But may I ask why you take so keen an interest in my movements?" he asked.

"Yes, because you are living a double life; because you have shown such a strong desire to rent the house in Clergy-street, where my father, Simeon Hoadley, lived and was murdered; because you have been to that house more than once since his death; because you have endeavored to gain possession of the property he left behind him; and because you have tried to rob me." Marion spoke fast in her anger. "You were in the house at Clergy-street on Sunday night, and on Monday night you tried to rob me in a cab within a few hundred yards of the very place where we stand. Is not that enough to make me take an interest in your movements?" The girl was very excited and her own words increased the warmth of her feelings.

"If it were all true, it would be; but, as before, you seem to be laboring under a complete delusion, and a wild one. It is scarcely necessary to notice charges of such a character," said Linnegan, calmly, "but if necessary, I could prove to you that I was not near the places you name on Monday night. The whole accusation is ridiculous."

"Perhaps you will call it ridiculous to say that you are James Linnegan, a returned convict. Ah! you turn pale at that, do you?" said Marion. "You shall have the opportunity of proving that you were not near the place on Monday night, and that you did not rob me of the bag; I will give you in custody for it," said the girl, as she saw a policeman come to the corner of the street.

"You do not mean this, Miss Jannaway?" cried Linnegan, excitedly, turning pale at the threat.

"I do, most certainly," replied the girl, firmly, "I am only too glad that I have found you," and she called the policeman and gave the man in charge.

"You will be sorry for this," was all he said, as he walked away in custody.

CHAPTER XXII

A TRAP

MARION had decided upon the arrest of Linnegan, mainly, because the letter from Ralph had made her confident of the latter's ability to give a perfectly satisfactory explanation of the circumstances, which seemed to connect him with the mystery. She thought, moreover, that if she were to charge Linnegan with the smaller offence of trying to rob her in the cab, she would in this way be able to prevent his escape, should he be wanted on the more serious charge; while if it were for any reason determined not to make that accusation, the smaller matter could be dropped.

But the girl had reckoned without knowing one most important fact. When Linnegan was searched at the police station, the curious seal, which had belonged to Simeon Hoadley, and had been mentioned in the cipher and was perfectly well-known to Marion, was found upon him. He was asked to account for the possession of it, and refused; saying merely that he could do so, if necessary, and at the proper time; but his confusion and agitation was so apparent, that no one could fail to notice it.

He was taken, almost directly before a magistrate. and charged with robbery; but the inspector asked for a remand and intimated that in all probability a graver

charge would be preferred at the next hearing. A portion of Marion's evidence was taken, enough to justify the magistrate in complying with the request, and the prisoner was remanded for a week.

Press ingenuity completed what was thus begun; and the evening papers contained a more or less colored description of the circumstance, with some hints that the man was Simeon Hoadley's murderer.

Marion herself was the object of much solicitude on the part of the press reporters; but she held her peace, and declined to say a word, and at length refused to speak to anyone, who could be even suspected of being a reporter.

She was exceedingly annoyed that her hand should have been forced in this way; and regretted having given Linnegan into custody before Ralph's return; and the worry and anxiety of the afternoon, destroyed the happier confidence of the morning and brought on afresh the old feeling of doubt and fear of consequences.

The next morning, moreover, these feelings were intensified by a strange letter from her lover; written evidently in a great haste, and apparently under the stress of strong emotion.

"Plymouth, Wednesday.

"My Dearest Marion.—What is this I see by the evening papers that you have done? I received your telegram when I went to the post for my business letters to-day; I shall address this to the bank, therefore. If I could have guessed for an instant that you contemplated such a rash act as this arrest of Linnegan, I would have

come home to stop it, even if it had cost me my situation. What can have induced you to do anything of the kind? I myself am quite sure that James Linnegan has had nothing to do with this. In fact, I know it. Oh, why have I not been able to see you for so long? If I could have seen you, I could have made all this clear to you—as clear as it is to me. But now I dread to think of what the consequences may be to us. I have kept silent too long, but I dare not write what I want to tell you. I shall come back as soon as possible, but I dare not leave this business without completing it. I telegraphed, last night, when I read the news, to the office to ask leave to return at once; but there is no one they can send to release me. Ah, my darling, you little know what it is you may have done! But for God's sake do nothing more until I am back, unless you wish me to stand by James Linnegan's side in the dock. Trust me. I can explain everything; but do not say a word to anyone of what suspicions you may have about Linnegan. Do not speak to a soul about it. I know you love me, and will do this for my sake. I am nearly distracted, and my faith in your love for me alone sustains me—Your true lover,

"RALPH."

Marion read this wild letter carefully several times, but could make little or nothing of it. She could not understand it. The only conclusion that seemed clear was that in some way Ralph seemed to know James Linnegan, and said that he knew of his innocence. But then Ralph had not the knowledge which Marion herself had. How could Ralph be certain that Linnegan was innocent, when

the two men, to her personal knowledge, did not even know one another by sight? Ralph had taken Linnegan for a detective when they had met in the Clergy-street house on the Sunday night, and as she recalled this fact, Marion felt utterly baffled and beaten.

If Ralph did know that Linnegan had not killed her father, it must be either because he knew where Linnegan was on the night of the murder—and this seemed impossible in face of the fact that the two men did not even know each other by sight or because Ralph knew who had committed the crime. And at that dreadful thought Marion turned faint and sick with fear.

She read his letter again with this thought uppermost in her mind, and tried to see to what interpretation such circumstances and ideas would lead. But she could get no farther with any explanation. Whatever view she took or sought to take, the letter seemed to contradict it. All Ralph's words seemed to point to some connection between Linnegan and himself. Moreover, there was the further damning fact that of the two trinkets which her father had purposely intended to aid the discovery of the thief, one was in Linnegan's possession and the other in Ralph's. It seemed clear, therefore, that they must know one another; and thus Marion kept wandering round a circle of thoughts, each of which only served to contradict or confuse the others.

It was a relief to her, when a servant came and told her that a woman wished to speak to her, and Mrs. Bloxam was shown up.

"Why do you come to me?" asked Marion, rather sternly.

"To beg you to forgive me, Miss Jannaway," answered Mrs. Bloxam, in a somewhat whining tone, "and to ask you if I can be of any assistance to you with regard to this villain, Linnegan."

"What kind of assistance do you mean?"

"I am willing to give evidence against him. I know him well, and I know his desperate character; and I know that he came to Clergy-street shortly before your poor father's death, and that your father was always in great fear of him. I can prove this on oath."

"Why do you come and tell me this, instead of going at once to the police."

"Don't be too hard on me, miss," said Mrs. Bloxam, beginning to cry, and wiping her eyes with her shawl. "Don't have me turned out of Clergy-street, and I'll do all I can to help you. I can go and identify him directly, and can swear to all I tell you."

"I told you before, the conditions on which you could stop at Clergy-street," replied Marion; "and the return you made me was to follow me and accuse me of being a thief. The matter is now in Mr. Price's hands, and I shall not interfere. You had your chance and you threw it away. I can do nothing for you."

"Don't have me turned on to the streets, Miss Jannaway—don't do that, for the love of Heaven. I was a good servant and a faithful one to your old father; and all without payment or reward, except his promises to give me the house; and he deceived me about that. Don't turn me on to the streets!" and she cried bitterly as she pleaded.

Marion's heart was not difficult to touch, and though

she disliked the woman, she could not bear to see her in such distress; moreover she felt that there was much truth in what Mrs. Bloxam said about the broken promises. Her father had certainly deceived the woman grossly.

"I do not want to be hard upon you," said Marion, "or to do anything that is at all unfair. I certainly do not wish you to be turned into the streets, as you say; and if you will do as I requested about the house in Clergy-street, I will let you have it for so long as you do not put it to any improper use.

Mrs. Bloxam thanked her with gushing effusiveness, almost going on to her knees, and wishing to take her hand and kiss it. Marion wrote a letter to Mr. Price, telling him what she had agreed to do, and gave it to Mrs. Bloxam to take to him.

"And what about Linnegan, miss?"

The question was a very embarrassing one for Marion, in view of Ralph's letter; but she felt that she dared not even appear to wish to conceal any of the facts of the case.

"You had better go to the police, Mrs. Bloxam, and tell them what you have told me," she replied.

"The police are fools," answered the other, shortly. "If they weren't fools, they might have put their hands on Linnegan days ago. I've known where he's been living ever so long."

"Indeed," said Marion, quickly, looking keenly and closely at her companion. "Where was that?"

"Why, right under their noses in Clergy-street—aye almost opposite to No. 50; where he could almost see

everything that went on in the house from the very first," answered the other.

"In Clergy-street," said Marion, as if greatly surprised. "How do you know this, and why have you not spoken of it before?"

"I was only waiting to see what these boobies would do; but I had my eye on him all the time; and if he'd shown any signs of bolting I should have come down on him sharp enough. I first knew it through seeing him go into the house disguised. But he couldn't deceive me with all his disguises," and the woman shook her head, in a confident, knowing way.

"Did the people in the house know who he was?" asked Marion.

"Not they, or else he'd have had a warm time of it, I can tell you. I've known them for a long while as decent, honest, working folk. But now I'm going to ask you a great favor, Miss Jannaway. You know I served your father well for a number of years, and he never grumbled at me, and always allowed that I was a good servant to him. I should like to serve you the same, miss, if you think you'd care to have me. I can do anything in the way of house-work, and I should like to feel that you'd forgiven me for my silliness and anger the other day. I am really and truly sorry, I am indeed."

"I have not made up my mind yet what I am going to do, or where I am going to live, so that I cannot give you any answer to such a request. But I thank you for the offer all the same," answered Marion.

"I'm sorry you cannot do that, miss. I should like

to have shown you that I wish to serve you. Is there anything I can do to prove this to you!" she asked.

"No, I think not, thank you, Mrs. Bloxam. But I shall be glad to know as much as you can tell me of these people with whom Linnegan has been living."

"Would you like to see them, miss? Shall I get the woman of the house to come and see you here? I've no doubt she'd come if I asked her; but I know she doesn't want to have to give evidence if she can help it. She's a decent body, and would tell you anything she knew; though to be sure she has a rather crochetty temper and might not talk so freely to you out of her house as she would to me in it. But I can ask her if you wish it.".

"Has she told you whether this Linnegan had any friends or confederates come to see him?" asked Marion, after a little consideration. She felt that she was in a very difficult position. She was very unwilling, after Ralph's letter, to take any fresh steps or allow the police to get hold of any fresh information; but she was at the same time very anxious to get as much information as possible.

She was rather afraid that if she went so far as to have the woman brought to her at the bank, some notice of it might be taken: and she debated in her own mind whether it would not be wiser to go round and see the woman in her own house. As the man she had to fear was in jail, she had no cause for fear. Yet she hesitated, and for this reason put the further questions to Mrs. Bloxam.

"I can't say I've questioned her very closely about that," was the reply, "but I've no doubt she could tell you

a great deal if she came round to see you. She's a sharp, keen body enough, and knows her way about, right enough. Shall I fetch her round, miss. No doubt you'd be able to get her to go with us to the police."

"Did you yourself ever see any one with him, Mrs. Bloxam, when he went to No. 50, or at any other time?"

"Yes, I've seen one man with him, but I don't know that I could describe him; though, may be, I should know him again if I clapped eyes on him."

Marion then described the men by whom she had been surrounded when Linnegan had seized her in Clerkenwell, and asked Mrs. Bloxam whether she had seen any of them with Linnegan. After a moment's consideration she answered in the negative. She had never seen anyone at all like them.

The girl next gave a description of Ralph Gething, and asked the same question.

"I fancy, somehow, I have," said Mrs. Bloxam, "or perhaps I have heard Mrs. Dunn—that's the name where Linnegan lodged—speak of such a man, but she'd know."

Marion's interest was now keenly roused, and after a pause of consideration, she said.

"Do you think Mrs. Dunn would mind my going to her house to ask her a few questions, Mrs. Bloxam!" She was not looking at the woman as she put the question, otherwise, the expression which showed on her companion's face, would have made the girl pause.

"I don't think she would," said Mrs. Bloxam, looking down to keep her face out of sight.

"Then I think I'll go round with you, now," said Marion.

On the way to Clergy-street, Marion told Mrs. Bloxam, that she could explain to Mrs. Dunn, that the questions were only put to gather information, and that the woman might not have to give evidence after all.

When they reached the house—it was that which Marion had seen the man Linnegan enter—the door was opened almost as soon as Mrs. Bloxam knocked, and Marion rather shrank from entering, when she saw what kind of a woman Mrs. Dunn was; a stout, red-faced, hard-featured, repulsive-looking, dirty woman, very slatternly in her dress and appearance. She wore a large white apron, which might have been put on for the occasion, as its cleanliness made everything else look the dirtier by contrast.

Mrs. Bloxam explained in a very few words what Marion wanted and who she was, and Mrs. Dunn asked her civilly to come in, saying she would tell her what she knew, and answer any questions.

After a moment's hesitation, Marion stepped in, and the door was immediately closed behind her. She was taken by the woman of the house into the back room, and to her surprise and alarm Mrs. Dunn locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

"Sit down, miss," said the woman, as she herself sat down on a chair by the door. Her manner was quiet and almost deferential, but it seemed to Marion as if the other was playing a part.

"Why do you lock the door?" she asked.

"Well, we can talk better when we ain't afeard of no one interrupting us," she answered. "I didn't much think as Mrs. Bloxam would be able to persuade you to

come; but as you are here, there's a many things as we may want to talk about, and we don't want no listeners," and she looked cunningly at the girl as she spoke.

Marion's heart sank at the words, for she recognized that she had stepped into a carefully prepared trap.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARION IN DANGER

DURING the short silence that followed the woman's last words, Marion felt that her position was a very dangerous one, and that it would tax all her ingenuity, courage, and resource to prevent the consequences from being very serious.

Instinctively she recognized that she must show as bold and determined a front as possible; and that any sign of weakness on her part would do no good, and would only tend to make matters worse.

She resolved, therefore, to pretend not to think that there was wrongful intention on the other's part, and to speak and act as she would have done in such a visit as she had intended this to be.

"I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Dunn, for your forethought in preventing our being interrupted," she said, after a pause which had not been a long one, as Marion had very quickly resolved upon her course of action, "though I don't want you to do more than just answer one or two questions. But you must not think that good Mrs. Bloxam persuaded me to come; I volunteered to come to you because I thought you might not care to be troubled to leave your house at a busy time of the day."

"Ah, well, so long as you're here it ain't a matter of

much difference whether you come on your own will or not," answered the woman. "And there ain't no doubt as you are here, is there?"

"Not the least," said Marion, answering the other's unpleasant meaning look with a cheerful smile. She felt that she had a more difficult part to play than ever before in her life. She continued in a light tone, "But now we must get to business, for I'm afraid I can't stay long, as I have to get back soon."

"Have you?" returned the woman, calmly. "It may take some time, though, to do all the talking we've got to do."

"Well, we must be as quick as we can, because I told Mr. Fawcett, when I said I was coming to see you, that I should not be very long."

The woman started at this thrust, and looked at the girl keenly, but Marion pretended not to see her.

"What I wanted to ask you, Mrs. Dunn," she said, in a quiet, business-like, unconcerned tone, "was, whether you could tell me anything of the movements or associates of the man, James Linnegan, who lodged here, and is now in the hands of the police? Mrs. Bloxam told me that she had known you for a long time, and that you had always been very particular about your lodgers; and that the fact of this man turning out such a bad character had greatly annoyed you."

"I don't want to have no dealings with any matter as may make it necessary for me to go to court and give evidence. I ain't a going to do it, and that's flat."

She spoke with much less parade of civility than she had yet shown; and Marion guessed rightly enough that

the news of Mr. Fawcett knowing where she was had greatly disturbed her; and the girl wished with all her heart that she had really been wise enough to tell Mr. Fawcett.

"I don't want you to give evidence unless you wish," replied Marion; "but if you can make some suggestions to me, or give me any kind of clue that may lead to my finding out anything of importance, it will serve my purpose just as well; and you may depend upon it that you will be well paid for your trouble."

"I ain't no spy, nor informer; and don't want no blood-money, either," returned the woman, warmly; but it was clear enough that she was only fencing with the questions, to get time to think, or for some other purpose.

"I did not wish to suggest that you should play the spy, Mrs. Dunn, nor take what you call blood-money. There is no thought of such a thing in my mind. I want the information as much for my private purposes as for anything else. There is plenty of evidence against Linnegan without your speaking at all."

"What is the evidence?" asked the woman, sharply.

"I am not at liberty to say; but you may believe me when I tell you that there is plenty. I can tell you part of it. He is known to have threatened my father; to have been to the house shortly before the deed was done; to have lived here, right opposite to No. 50; and certain property known to have been in my father's possession at the time of his death has been found on him."

"What was that?"

"There is no doubt that he took a large sum of money

away with him, and with it some articles that can be identified."

"Oh, that's it, is it!" replied the woman, emphatically, "The villain."

"What I wish to know is, whether he had any confederates in the matter, as I have some reason to believe," and Marion described to her as she had before done to Mrs. Bloxam, first the men who had stopped her in Clerkenwell, and then Ralph Gething.

"I don't know anything about it, but I think I've seen the young chap you mentioned last; but I ain't very certain."

"Ah, well, I see you do not know very much that is of importance to me," said Marion, rising, "so I think I will not detain you; especially as I said I should be back by about this time, to lunch. Will you kindly open the door? Dear me," she added, taking out her watch, "It's later than I thought; it's nearly one o'clock."

"I ain't asked my questions yet," said the woman making no attempt to rise from her chair.

"What questions do you wish to ask me."

"First, I want to know whether you're going to let the house over the road?" said Mrs. Dunn, after a pause, in which she appeared to be thinking how she could best frame the queries. Her manner was hesitating and confused.

"I have arranged for Mrs. Bloxam to have the house," replied Marion readily, "I arranged that to-day with her."

"Oh," was the short, sharp response. "And what

about the things as are in the place. Are you going to give 'em to her?"

"I have not thought about them," answered Marion.

"They ain't of much account now, are they?" the woman accompanied this with a cunning sneer.

"I really don't know their value," replied Marion, as indifferently as she could, but full of wonder as to what was coming.

"I mean after you've picked 'em over and taken away everything that was worth having. Do you understand that?"

"The goods in the house now are the same that were removed from it—just the same," declared Marion.

"Yes, the same with a difference," and Mrs. Dunn laughed again very unpleasantly. "What did you take away when you were over there on Monday? That's what I want to know," and she looked angrily at the girl, as she put this last question.

"What I took away," began Marion.

"Yes, what you took away after you'd been in the house roking and poking about, and knocking the furniture to bits, and breaking here and there; what you took away with you, that's it; and while you're about it, you may as well out with the rest of the story, and tell me how a lot of dirty tinned meat and biscuits come to be hidden in the house. Now you know what the questions are, and you've got to answer," and the woman threw off all disguise, and looked threateningly at Marion.

"I know nothing of all this; and what is more I will not allow you to put such questions to me. The house

and everything in it is mine; and if I chose to go to it and chop everything up into firewood and bring it away a stick at a time, no one would have the right to prevent me."

"Oh, rights be blowed! who's talking about rights?" exclaimed the woman, with vehement coarseness. "What did you do with them jewels that you carried away? You answer the question fair and square, and don't come any of your hoity-toity big talk over me."

"Jewels!" cried Marion, with a laugh, "I should think you must be mad to talk of such things in the same breath with a house like that across the road."

"Should you, though? Well, I'm not mad at all; and what's more I'm not such a fool as not to know quite well what I'm talking about. What did you do with them I say," repeated the woman, in a very threatening manner.

"If you know anything about the matter, you must know very well that the man Linnegan took away all that was of value, having found the secret hiding place under the floor. The police made this discovery directly after my father's death." Marion spoke very confidently, but her alarm was increasing very fast.

"Well, I know he didn't, then, so that's for you. And you've no call to be told how I know it, either. And if he did get something," she continued in a confused but blustering way, as if the admission of her knowledge had slipped out unintentionally, "if he did it wasn't jewels. You got them you know you did; for you were in such a precious tear and flurry when Mrs. Bloxam came to the

door, that you dropped some of 'em on the floor, and didn't even stop to pick 'em up again. So, now, are you going to say where they are? You'd better."

"Whatever few small trifles I may have found, are now in perfectly safe keeping, in the care of Mr. Fawcett, with whom I am living now, and who knows perfectly well where I am, and where to come and look for me."

The woman rose from her chair and stared maliciously and angrily at Marion.

"You hussy!" she said at length, her lips scarcely parting to let out the words. "You deep, artful hussy. I don't believe you. I believe you've got 'em on yer now; and I'm blest if I ain't got a good mind to see whether you have or not."

She was a powerful woman, though stout, and Marion looked at her, as if to estimate what the probable result would be if Mrs. Dunn were to attack her, as she seemed about to do.

Marion was a strong girl—lithe, active and muscular—but scarcely a match for such an antagonist. She was, moreover, naturally wishful to avoid an encounter of the kind, if in any way it were possible.

"I have nothing whatever of any value upon me; except my watch and chain, and a few shillings in my purse. I will give you these if you will allow me to leave the house."

"I won't," answered the other shortly, "so don't you think it, my girl. You're a deep 'un, you are; but you'll find others can be as deep as yourself. I want them jewels, and I mean having 'em, that's flat."

"I have no jewels," protested the girl.

"I don't believe you, so there," answered Mrs. Dunn, who was working herself into a passion.

"You can do as you please about that," said Marion, "Tell me, however, how I can satisfy you."

"By giving me the jewels and making an end of this fuss and bother; and you'd better be sharp about it, too, for I ain't over good at bearing contradiction, and I've had pretty near enough from you already."

"But I tell you I have no jewels about me," said Marion. "I can prove this to you by turning out my pockets."

"Pockets!" cried the other, in reply, with a short laugh of disbelief. "Do you think I'm such a fool as to suppose you've got 'em crammed in your pockets. I wonder you don't tell me you ain't got your handbag with you. I ain't such a fool as some folks, and it won't wash with me—so you'd best hand over, if you don't want a row."

"Well, I can't do more than I have offered to do. Even if you don't believe me, you might, at any rate, believe I should not be so foolish, if I had a number of jewels, as to come here with them."

"Ah, that's a deal more like the truth—but then, you see, you didn't know where you was coming to, and that makes the difference," said the woman, with great cunning.

"If I didn't know the kind of house, at least I had the prudence to tell my friends the address of it," retorted Marion, keeping up an appearance of bold confidence.

"Then I'd better make haste and help myself," replied the other. "You've got them jewels hid away in your

clothes, if you've got 'em about you at all, so you can take off your hat and let down that hair of yours, just to start the search."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," answered Marion firmly.

"Oh, won't you? we'll soon see about that," and with these words, she made a quick rush at the girl, and before Marion could defend herself from the attack, seized her hat and tore it from her head. Then she drew back and examined it carefully; tearing out the small feather that was fastened in it, and stripping off the ribbons and scrutinizing them with the greatest care to see whether anything was concealed. She examined the hat itself, which was a felt one, in the same way.

While she was doing this, Marion looked hurriedly round the room to see whether there was any chance of escape; and her heart fell as she recognized that there was none; and that unless she could get the key of the door from the woman, the prospect was a bad one.

She eyed her assailant very narrowly, watching her every movement, and nerved herself up for what she knew would be a most severe struggle. Then, it occurred to her, that she would be much freer if she could get her jacket off,—it was a rather heavy imitation sealskin—and this suggested to her to try and out-wit the woman.

"I will do what you wish," she said, as soon as the other had completed her examination of the hat, and had tossed it on to the little narrow dirty bed that lay in one corner of the room. "I will let down my hair."

Marion had beautiful hair, long and thick, of a rich

deep brown color, and she took out the hairpins as she spoke, and allowed it to fall over her neck and shoulders and down to her waist. She held her head back and shook out her hair.

"You can see there's nothing there," she said.

"I'd rather feel," said the woman brusquely; and she went behind the girl and passed her coarse thick hands through it.

"I'll take off my jacket, and you can examine that while I put up my hair," said Marion, and she slipped off the jacket and gave it to the woman, and then bound up her hair very close to her head, and fastened it very securely and tightly with the hairpins.

As she was doing this and looking at Mrs. Dunn, and casting glances all round the room, she saw a cloth or sheet of some kind lying loose on a chair close by her; and then a plan of action, desperate but not hopeless, came into her head.

The woman was very intently occupied with the search, and stood now and then with her back partly turned to the girl, while the pocket in which Marion had seen her put the key, was open in the back of her dress.

Taking advantage of one of these moments, Marion seized the loose sheet, and rushing suddenly upon the woman, threw it over her head, and at the same moment plunged a hand into the pocket and pulled out the key. Then she gave the woman a vigorous push on to the bed, and before her antagonist could clearly understand what had happened and extricate herself from the folds of the sheet, Marion unlocked the door and ran out into the passage.

"Hullo, hullo, what's all this now?" cried a man's voice, just as Marion neared the front door, and some one came quickly out of the front room, and seized her by the arm, and prevented her opening the door

CHAPTER XXIV

A RISKY STRATAGEM

MARION cowered down in fear, and trembled in the man's grasp.

"So she was one too many for yer, missus, was she," said the man, addressing the woman who came out of the back room, and laughing loudly and coarsely. "I tell yer, she's about as deep as they're made."

"You hussy! You cowardly, shameful hussy, to try and kill me from behind like that, and take me unawares. I'll teach you to come your tricks with me, you baggage," and the woman relieved her feelings, with a string of abuse and oaths, and seized the girl roughly and struck at her.

"No, no, missus, that ain't right, the girl's a plucky 'un and yer mustn't go to 'it 'er when I'm 'olden' of 'er; but I'm 'anged if I wouldn't like to see a bit of a set-to between yer both," and the man laughed, as he put out his arm and kept the woman away from Marion.

"Ugh, you baggage, you," she cried again.

"I only tried to get away, and I did not attempt to do you the least injury," said Marion.

"Injury," exclaimed the furious woman. "'Tain't me as 'ull get injured, I can tell you, and that afore very long."

"'Ere, yer'd best go back into the room agen," said the man. "What do yer mean to do now?" he added to Mrs. Dunn.

"You have conquered me," said Marion, as calmly as she could speak, "and now I'll do whatever you wish. I am in your power, and you can force me, I know; but I will agree to any terms you name."

"Blow me, but yer *are* a plucky 'un, and no mistake," cried the man, with the admiration of courage natural to a brute. "Yer made a blamed good fight while fightin' paid; and, now, ye're beat, yer know 'ow to cave in, proper. If yer'll on'y act as square as yer talk, yer shan't come to no 'arm."

The three then returned to the room at the back, the woman first, Marion next, and the man bringing up the rear.

As soon as they were in the room, the man said, with another laugh at the woman:

"Seems I'd better act as doorkeeper, now, old woman —yer ain't strong enough, nor artful enough for this job;" and the words angered the woman greatly.

"If you'll let me leave the house," said Marion, "I will give you a hundred pounds and my promise to say nothing of what has passed here."

"Fork it out, then," was the man's reply, and he held out his hand.

"I haven't it with me."

"Oh, I see, that's the game, is it? Yer'll send it by post, I s'pose with the compliments o' the p'lice. No, thank yer—not fur this child."

"No, I will give it into the hands of anyone you like to mention, and not a soul shall know why I paid it."

"Much obliged to yer," answered the man with another grin, wagging his head from side to side. "The on'y 'ands I trust, are this pair," and he held them out in front of him.

"Then I'll give it to you yourself."

"Yes, with Mr. Blooming Detective waitin' round the corner. You're a clever young woman an' a plucky 'un, too, I don't doubt; but we ain't all of us as green as the old woman here, to have a sheet flung over our eyes," and the man laughed again. He seemed on the whole to be a rather good-tempered scoundrel, and to be much pleased at being able to turn the laugh so easily against the woman. "If yer want to give me a 'undred pounds, yer must give it to me 'ere in this 'ouse; and 'ow you mean to do that is your business, not mine."

"I don't see what I am to do, then," said Marion, "except to resign myself to what you may choose to do to me until my friends send to inquire after me."

"What's that?" asked the man, looking across at the girl while an angry scowl showed on his face.

"My friends know where I have come, they will be expecting me to return before long; and if I do not return, they will send to look for me. If, therefore, you won't agree to release me on the terms I have offered, there is nothing for me but to wait until they send or come here. I told Mrs. Dunn this, some time ago."

"Why didn't yer tell me afore, yer fool," said the man to the woman, very angrily.

"'Cause I didn't believe it," answered the woman, sullenly. "She's got them jewels on her now, that's why she's lying, and that's why she took off her jacket and made a rush to get out just now."

"Don't be a fool, woman. Who is it knows where yer've come to?" he said, after a minute's consideration, turning to Marion.

"The friends with whom I am living," was the reply.

"Jest wait a minute," said the man, and he went out of the room. "Look arter 'er missus, and don't let 'er make a fool of yer agen, else yer'll know of it," he said, meaningly.

"She'd better try it on," was the woman's angry answer.

Marion made no attempt to escape in the man's absence, but sat quite still. She knew that the only motive the people could have for detaining her was greed, and she resolved to buy her liberty, using the statement about the Fawcetts' knowing where she had come, as a lever to drive as easy a bargain as possible.

Presently she heard the man's heavy footstep descending the staircase, and she glanced at his face as he entered. There was not a sign on it of anything but ill-temper and uneasiness.

"Wot about that money?" he said. "'Ow are yer goin' to get it 'ere? Yer can't leave the 'ouse without it."

Marion reflected for a minute.

"Have you anyone you can send to get it? I will try and have it sent to me here in that case," she said.

"Yes, we'll find somebody for that job," answered the man.

"Give me a pen, and ink, and some paper, and I will write a note."

There was nothing of the kind in the house, and Marion gave the woman a shilling to go and fetch some.

While she was away the girl sat thinking intently. An idea had occurred to her that made her hopeful of being able to let Mr. Fawcett know the danger in which she was placed, even in the very letter she was going to write about the money she was to send for. She had explained to him the principle of the cipher which her father had used, and she thought that if she were to put in the letter a warning word in cipher, he would be shrewd enough to understand it, and to send her help.

She racked her brains to think what short word would best serve as a signal, and how she could explain the fact of her using it to the people about her.

"Are yer sure your friends know where ye are?" said the man suddenly, to her, as she sat down to write the note. "Don't yer play no pranks wi' me, yer know. I ain't made in a way as lets a body do that safely wi' me," and he looked very threateningly at Marion as he spoke.

"Yes, I am sure," answered Marion, telling the untruth, though not without qualms of conscience.

"Then yer can jest write in this 'ere letter as yer've changed yer mind and won't be back for a while d'ye see?"

Marion made a great show of resistance at this, and at first flatly refused; but after a while she reflected that as she had not told Mr. Fawcett anything of her movements, she could arouse his suspicions more easily by doing what the man asked. She resolved to head the letter

with the words "In danger," and to pretend that the cipher for this was the number of a particular account from which the money had to come.

She wrote, therefore, as follows:—

"DEAR MR. FAWCETT,

8 o £ 6 o ½ 7"

"Will you please let me have by bearer the sum of one hundred pounds (£100) in gold, on the above account.

"I find I am compelled to alter my plans. I told you this morning that I was coming to number 31 Clergy-street, to look up particulars of the man Linnegan's circumstances. I have decided not to do this to-day, and the business I have in hand is likely, I think, to prevent my returning to you for some while. Do not be uneasy; and please do not fail to send the money as I need it particularly.—Yours faithfully,

MARION JANNAWAY."

"What's them figures at the top?" said the man, laying his heavy finger on the line of cipher, and looking down at Marion suspiciously and threateningly. "I ain't goin' to have nothin' in the letter as I don't understand. If yer try to trick me, by——, I'll slit that throat of your'n as soon as look at yer."

"That's the number of the account from which the money has to come," answered the girl, as calmly as she could. "It's the sign of a particular account from which, by arrangement with Mr. Fawcett, I never draw money without putting this number."

"Then I ain't goin' to 'ave any private marks, I can tell yer," said the man, roughly.

"Very good, then I can't get you the money. There are only a few pounds on the ordinary account," Marion felt that this was a crisis and that everything would turn upon the result of the conversation, and that she was telling these falsehoods to save her life.

The man growled and grumbled and swore, and threatened the girl, but gave way at last.

"Yer must send a check with this, else yer won't get no money. Yer won't get no 'undred pounds for a letter," he said.

"You are right; it may make matters easier," she assented. She was so pleased at her success in tricking the man, that she had difficulty in hiding her exultation. In grumbling over the cipher, the man had forgotten to object to the wording of the letter, where Marion had cunningly contrived to give even the address of the house.

She drew a check on a blank sheet of paper.

London, Dec. 12, 188—

To the Capital Bank, Clerkenwell branch.

Pay self, or order, the sum of one hundred pounds, on account of 80£60½7"

£100. MARION JANNAWAY.

This she signed at the back, and handed check, letter and envelope to the man for him to fasten up.

He took them, and read both the letter and the check, the woman looking over his shoulder the while; and then he left the room to send to the bank. Marion did not know who was to be the messenger, but guessed that

probably Mrs. Bloxam would be sent. She felt much more at ease than she had been before despatching the letter, and assured herself that as soon as Mr. Fawcett had read the letter, his suspicions would be aroused, and, knowing, as he did, of the attempts that had been made to rob her, he would be on the alert to interpret the cipher words she had sent.

The time dragged on wearily while the girl waited for the return of the messenger. The woman was with her, but did not speak, contenting herself with sitting on a chair close to the door, with her face turned toward Marion. It was evident that she did not intend to give the girl another chance of taking her by surprise.

Marion listened eagerly to every sound in the house, and after waiting between half-an-hour and an hour, heard the front door opened and someone enter. Soon afterwards the man came rather hurriedly and excitedly into the back room.

"It's lucky for yer it's all right," he said; "'ere's the quids, missus," he added, holding up a little bag of gold, and laughing; "and 'ere's the letter. *You* can 'ave that; I've read it, and there ain't much in it."

Marion read the letter hurriedly.

"Dear Miss Jannaway,—I send money by bearer, as requested, and note what you say as to delay in return. Shall expect you when we see you.—Yours faithfully,

ROBERT FAWCETT."

As soon as she had read it, Marion rose and went to put on her hat, which lay on the bed in a very damaged state.

"Wot are yer doin'?" growled the man.

"I am going," answered Marion, quietly. "You have the money which I agreed to give you, and for which you agreed to let me go. Our bargain is complete."

The man burst into an uproarious laugh.

"That's a good 'un, an' no mistake, I'm gormed! Wot? Do you think I'm sech a bloomin' fool as to let a nice, kind gal like you, as can lay golden eggs to the tune of a 'undred pounds a piece, slip out 'o my clutches. Not me—I ain't made that way quite," and the ruffian burst out laughing again.

"What do you intend to do with me, then?" asked Marion.

"I intend to keep yer 'ere, and no bloomin' mistake," answered the man, rolling out the words with great emphasis and enjoyment, and laughing as he spoke. "'Tain't often as I picks up wi' a dainty little thing like you, wot can turn on a tap and let it run quidses whenever yer likes. Ye're the sort o' gal I likes; and jest to show as there ain't no ill-feelin' in my 'eart toward yer, I'll drink your 'ealth out o' your own money. Yer'll be wantin' something yerself, too, seein' as yer friends don't expect yer now. But it's a rich 'un!" he said, with an oath, and a heavy hoarse laugh. "'Ere missus, go and get some booze," and the man tossed a sovereign to the woman, and shouted after her as she left the room, "Good stuff, mind, none o'yer thin swipey muck for me; we've got to drink the young lady's health, yer know," and again he laughed coarsely and loudly, and shouted again as an afterthought, "and look 'ere, bring some smokes wi' yer; the lady won't fancy my bacca."

While Mrs. Dunn was gone for the drink, the man began to show the good humor he was in, in a somewhat demonstrative way. He told Marion that he liked her "for a plucky 'un;" that he "'had a mind jest to give a kiss, while the old woman was out of the way;" that she was lucky to have come under his care; and as he talked in this way, he laid his hand on her shoulder and then shook her hand, and frightened the girl by these and other acts of the same kind. She bore everything in silence, though the disgust she felt at the brute's conduct kindled an inward fire of resentment and rage.

When the drink came, the man turned to that like a thirsty horse, and drank glass after glass of beer and spirits indiscriminately, with great rapidity and apparent delight, while he puffed at the cigars, until the room was cloudy with rank smoke.

The woman also drank, and they both tried to persuade Marion to take some spirits; but she refused.

"Did yer take any upstairs?" asked the man after a time, the drink beginning to take effect, so far as to set him talking with less reserve.

"Yes, they're all right."

"Yer'd better drink something little lady," said the man, using this title to the girl half in ridicule, half in earnest. "Yer may want somethin' yet awhile to keep up that pluck o' yourn," he said, meaningly.

"I don't want any drink," said Marion. "All I want is to go away. Are there no conditions on which you will consent to let me go away?"

"No, I don't know as there are. I like yer pluck, and I like yer looks, an' it soots me to 'ave yer 'ere, if it's

only to look at yer, an' to feel that if I likes to 'old up my finger and order yer, d'ye see, and order yer," he repeated, with an emphasis which was the result of the drink he had had, "yer can put them little fingers o' your'n to work, and jest roll in another 'undred quid. That's why I want yer to stay."

"Will you never let me go, do you mean? You can't hope to keep me here without being found out."

"Oh, can't I," he replied, rolling his eyes on her. "Can't I? Well then I can try, and that's enough for me. Anyway, I can keep yer as long as I want yer, and that'll be till yerv'e done wot yer 'ave to do."

"What's that? Let me do it at once and go," said the girl, whose fear of ill consequences rose rapidly as she saw the effect of the drink in the man.

"Well, I'll tell yer wot it is. Yer can go away just as soon as ever all them jewels and money which Linnegan and Bloxam have told me yer took away from No. 50 oppersite is in my possession. D'yer understand that? When they're in my 'ands," and he held out his hands towards the girl and shook them. "Now, d'yer understand? I mean 'avin' every shillin' and every stone, and when I've got 'em yer can go, and not till then. And if I don't get 'em why I'll choke that white wizen o' your'n, that's all;" and he put his great fingers and thumb to his own throat as he said this, and looked threateningly at Marion, and then took some more drink.

CHAPTER XXV

IN IMMINENT PERIL

THE candid savagery of the ruffian's last speech made Marion terribly afraid. She could see that he was fast getting drunk, and she knew perfectly well that even if he were to drink himself into a condition of stupor, the stages through which he would have to pass before insensibility came would be times of real peril for her.

She perceived the dangers of the situation, therefore, but was powerless to take any means to defend herself from them. Her chief hope was that Mr. Fawcett would make a vigorous effort to solve the small cipher message she had sent to him, and that he would take immediate steps to secure her safety. One source of fear to her was that perhaps what she had openly written might mislead him into a belief that she was really safe and well, and detained by legitimate causes, and as the time passed she became more and more anxious to send him another message and hidden appeal for help.

In this reason she resolved to take a very risky course and offer to write to the bank for all the jewels to be sent where she was.

"How can I get you what you want?" she asked the man. She had not been silent long, having come to her decision very quickly.

"I don't know, and I don't care either," was the answer. "All I know is if yer don't get 'em it'll be the worse for yer. Yer ain't goin' to make a fool o' me, I can tell yer."

"All that I have is at the bank," said Marion, "and if I were there I could get everything and give it you. But as you won't trust me what am I to do?"

"I don't know and I don't care," repeated the brute.

"Besides, if I give up everything to you how am I to know that you will let me go then?" asked Marion.

"Any 'ow yer like," was the answer. "D'yer mean yer can't trust me?" he asked, with sudden fierceness.

"You said you would let me go when I sent for the hundred pounds, but you refused as soon as it was in your hands."

"Well, wot if I did. Ain't I master o' my own tongue to say wot I like, and master o' my own 'ands to do wot I like. Eh? wot do yer say to that?" and he went and stood threateningly over the girl. Then a maudlin, drunken smile burst over his face, and he stroked her head and patted her cheeks till her blood chilled with indignation. "Look 'ere," he said, "yer a good gal and a plucky 'un—aye, a plucky 'un," this, with drunken iteration, "and I'd like to see anyone as 'll deny it; I'll wallop 'em, if they do. I like yer, little un; I do, and I ain't goin' to hit yer: no, nor let anybody else 'urt yer, neither," and he turned savagely on the woman as he said this. "But yer've got them jewels, yer know yer 'ave, yer cunnin' little devil," and he laughed and chucked the girl under the chin, turning the face up to his, "and yer'll 'ave to give 'em up. If yer do that, yer shall go away

free as free; strike me, if yer shan't. Now, is that square, little lady?" and he leered drunkenly at her as he spoke.

"I'll trust you," said Marion; and as if she was carried away by his fairness, she put out her hand and took the brute's great rough fingers in her own, and pressed them. It was a happy instinct on her part, and made a great impression. "I believe you. But now, listen to my difficulty. I will tell you nothing but the truth. What jewels there are in the bank are deposited, and a receipt has been given to me for them. That receipt is locked up in a desk in my bedroom. What I fear is, that without that receipt, the bank manager will not part with the jewels. But if you will send to the bank, again, I will write an order for their delivery to your messenger, and then we can see whether he will give them up."

"Right yer are, little 'un," said the man, clapping her on the shoulder. "Yer'll do. Write the letter, and we'll soon 'ave it up to the bank. And if he parts wi' the jewels yer'll be free. Straight, yer shall."

Marion reckoned that by this time Mr. Fawcett would have had an opportunity of puzzling out the cipher, and that a second message would have the effect of rousing him to instant action. She was also convinced that he would not part with the jewels; but as her anxiety was that the time which must elapse before help could come should be attended with as little danger as possible, she was glad that the people of the house should be kept expectant upon the result of the message to the bank; and she hoped also to fill out even more time by negotiations which would surely follow in reference to the jewels.

She wrote the following letter and order to Mr. Fawcett—

"DEAR MR. FAWCETT,—I have sudden need for the jewels deposited with you; please hand them to the bearer. I enclose receipt, marked as you desired, with the number of the deed box. Please act immediately.—Yours truly,

MARION JANNAWAY."

"Robt. Fawcett, Esq."

"Received of Mr. Robert Fawcett all the jewels deposited by me with the Capital Bank, Clerkenwell Branch. December 12th, 188—

MARION JANNAWAY."

"What's them figures agen?" asked the man, when Marion handed him the letter and receipt to fasten up and send.

"You see what I've said in the note," answered the girl. "They form the number of the deed box in the bank safes in which the jewels have been placed." She spoke calmly, and as the mention of the matter in the body of the letter seemed to bear out the interpretation she had given, the man was satisfied, and to Marion's delight took the envelope away to be sent up to the bank.

The real meaning of the cipher message was, "In peril;" and Marion conjectured that by the reference to the figures in the letter she would thoroughly rouse the manager to take energetic measures.

While the letter was being taken to the bank and the

answer was being awaited, the man sent his wife out for some more drink and cigars, and as soon as she returned he took it away, and Marion, to her intense relief, heard him go upstairs.

She did not make the slightest attempt to move from the chair in which she sat, but kept still, wondering what would be the result of the message, and hoping that help would soon come.

The man came back when the messenger returned from the bank, and he seemed to stagger a little as he entered the room holding a letter in his hand.

"Wot's this mean?" he growled, as he tossed the letter on to the girl's lap. "He ain't sent no jewels."

Marion read the letter aloud.

"Dear Miss Jannaway,—I have your note in reference to the jewels, and will do all in my power to let you have what you need; but I must say it is not usual for the bank to deliver up valuables for which a receipt has been given, except upon the production of the receipt itself. However, to meet your convenience I will take one of two courses, whichever you may please to adopt; either hand the jewels to you personally at the bank, or send them to be delivered into your hands direct. I trust one of these courses will suit you, as I really cannot give them up to a messenger unless you send me the receipt given by the bank.

"By the way, you have made a slip in writing the number of the deed box from memory. It should be 80 $\frac{1}{8}$1"83, not $\frac{1}{8}$7 as you put it.

"Please let me have your reply to this as soon as pos-

sible, as the afternoon is getting on, and I should like the matter settled before dark.

"Yours truly, ROBERT FAWCETT."

"Wot's he mean by all that rigmarole?" asked the man, as Marion finished reading the letter.

"That I can't have my own property," said the girl, warmly, and with as much seeming indignation as she could put into her voice and manner. "That I must go in person to the bank, or have someone sent from the bank to bring them to me, or else send by a messenger the receipt which the bank gave for them. I can't do either. It's preposterous; but it's not my fault, you see that," she cried, as she turned to him.

"Where's that receipt?"

"Locked up in a drawer in my room at the bank."

"Oh, is it? Wait a minute," and he went out and up the staircase, and Marion began to suspect that he was acting in concert with someone upstairs whom she had not seen.

When he came down his face wore a cunning grin.

"Look 'ere, I've 'it it. Jest write and tell that bloke as yer won't bother him no more to-day, but'll send round the receipt in the mornin'."

"But I haven't it in my possession," said Marion.

"No, I know yer 'aven't, *now;* but this 'ere's a biggish job, and p'raps some on us may find that bit o' paper in the night. Yer know where it is well enough to describe it; so jest write as I tell yer."

Marion wrote the note willingly enough; she was only too glad to have an opportunity of communicating again

with Mr. Fawcett, now that he had clearly shown he understood the cipher. The alteration he had made was to substitute 1 for 7, as the figure for the "e" in peril, thus using the same method exactly as her father had used, instead of following the order of the typewriter merely. She wrote—

"DEAR MR. FAWCETT,—I will not trouble you again to-night in the matter of the jewels, but will send round, or bring round, the receipt in the morning.

I am obliged for the correction; I must have misunderstood you, but it is quite clear now.—Yours faithfully,

MARION JANNAWAY."

This letter was given to the man, and sent up to the bank. Then he declared that there was only one more little bit of business to do, when they could settle down to "make a jolly good night of it." He went to the door and called, "Tom," and a young fellow entered, whom Marion recognised immediately as one of those who had been with Linnegan on the night when he had attempted to carry her away in Clerkenwell. She had been so accustomed to strange coincidences and experiences, that this recognition caused her little or no surprise.

"Whereabouts in that 'ouse do yer sleep; jest tell Tom 'ere where that is, and where about in the room yer've put that bloomin' receipt."

Being thoroughly on her guard and fully prepared for whatever might be asked, Marion had no difficulty in giving, with great readiness, a completely fanciful description of the position of the room and of the place

where the paper would be found. She was determined that it should never fall into the hands of these people, and knew that by the time her tale could be tested she would either be free or dead.

Marion did not disguise from herself that the time of the rescue would be fraught with imminent peril to her. She sat thus thinking how she would be able to help from the inside those who should come to aid her.

After she had given the false description of her bedroom at the bank, the young fellow whom they called "Tom," went away as soon as he had had something to drink, and it was with great satisfaction that Marion heard him leave the house. There was one man less in the house, she thought.

Then she sat and waited, watching the man and woman drink. The man showed no restraint in this, and as he began to find the beer insipid, he kept to the brandy, taking each glass stronger than the last, until he was drinking almost neat spirit. It soon told, and he went off into a sleep, the deep stertorous breathing of which, proclaimed how heavy was the stupor.

The woman, however, never relaxed her vigilance; and when it grew too dark for her to watch the girl, she lit two candles, one of which she placed near herself, the other near Marion. The latter then foresaw that when the party of rescue came to the house, it would be an immense advantage to her to be able to plunge the room in darkness; and thus, seemingly, without a purpose, she moved her seat to a spot from which she could blow out the one candle, and, with a towel that lay near, she could manage to extinguish the other.

Then she took a most minutely accurate observation of the position of every article of furniture in the room, so as to be able, in the dark, to find a place to hide.

All the time that she was making these plans, she was listening intently, straining every nerve to catch the first sound of any movement outside the house.

The first intimation she had that something would probably happen soon, was the failure of the messenger, Mrs. Bloxam, to return from the bank. Marion guessed that she had been detained on suspicion; if so, the rescue would not long be delayed. Probably it had been thought best to wait until dark.

The situation was a terrible one; and the eager anxiety with which Marion listened for any sound was almost painful. The heavy, regular, stertorous snoring of the man who lay on the bed, with only small breaks of silent breathing, made it difficult for the girl to hear anything at all; but after a weary time of suspense, she thought she could catch the sound of a movement at the back of the house—the soft, stealthy tread of feet. She would have given pounds to have been able to go to the window, throw up the blind, and look out.

Then she heard someone moving overhead, and heavy feet came slowly and cautiously down, and a hoarse, deep guttural whisper was heard calling—

"Dick—Dick, yer fool!"

The woman opened the door.

"What is it, Bill?" she asked.

"Where's Dick?"

"He's boozed, and sleeping it off on the bed."

"What does he want to go and drink to-night, of all

nights, I'd like to know—the fool!" This was said with a deep oath, and Marion almost started from her chair as she heard the voice.

It was the voice of James Linnegan, and the foul oath was the same she had heard him use in the house across the road.

What could it mean? He must have escaped!

"Try and rouse him," said the man.

"Mind the door, then, 'cause of the girl," said the woman, and she went to the bed and shook the sleeper violently, but all to no purpose. He growled out some oaths, and struck at her, and told her to leave him alone.

"Curse him!" said the voice, so close to Marion that she started and looked away from the bed to the door, when she met James Linnegan's eyes fixed upon her, and she shuddered in fear. But he said nothing to her, and, withdrawing his head from the room, spoke to the woman again.

"Where's that Bloxam? Ain't she back yet?"

"No; she's a long time."

While they were speaking together, Marion heard distinctly the sounds of footsteps outside the window of the room, and her heart began to beat at a great rate.

Just then, a single knock, lightly struck, sounded at the front door.

"That's Bloxam's knock," said the man; "I'll go," and Marion heard him go gently along the passage. She heard his hand pull the handle back, and the click of the latch. Then the door was flung open violently, and as violently shut again; there came a rush of feet into the house, a noise of heavy struggling in the passage, and a

tumult of cries, oaths and shouts of men, to which were joined the sound of heavy blows on the door at the back of the house. In the midst of it all, the thick, bass voice of Linnegan was heard shouting to the others that the police were on them.

As soon as Marion had heard the noise, she blew out the candle near to her, threw the towel at the other and extinguished that, and then screaming loudly for help, and fearing for her life if she should be found, squeezed herself into a little corner in a recess, between a chest of drawers and the wall, and waited silently for what should happen.

CHAPTER XXVI

A FIGHT FOR LIFE

Of all the experiences of her life, Marion had never known anything equal to the horror of the minutes that followed the warning shout of the man in the passage that the police were in the house.

The noise of the struggle and shouting, combined with Marion's screams roused the man on the bed, and he awoke and seemed to throw off instantly some of the effects of the drink. Rolling out the most terrible oaths and menaces against everyone who had disturbed him, and swearing viciously at the woman for having the room dark, he asked what was the matter.

"The police are here, Dick, and I think they've taken Bill," the woman replied, in a loud whisper.

"Why don't yer get a light? Do you mean to have me taken like a rat in a trap?" he growled sinking his voice to a husky whisper, and garnishing the words with oaths. "Get a light, can't yer."

"I can't find no matches. I had a couple of candles alight, but that young hussy has put them both out."

The man's reply to this was a threat that made Marion's blood chill.

She heard him get off the bed, and stagger across the room to where she had been sitting, and then heard him

swear when he couldn't find her. He almost touched her as he passed.

"Where is she? 'As she got out o' the room. If they mean to take me, by———I'll give 'em something to take me for."

"No, she's in the room somewhere; the door's locked and ain't bin undone all the time; I've got the key."

"Come 'ere, yer artful young she-devil, or it'll be the worse for yer when I catch yer. This is your work, in some way, and I'll make yer pay for it. If I get my fingers on that throat o' yourn I'll stop your screechin', curse me if I don't. Yer won't play no more tricks wi' me, ner nobody else. Why don't yer get a light, yer fool, so as I can find her," he asked, savagely, of the woman.

Marion crouched down in her corner and squeezed herself into the smallest possible space, as she heard the man feeling about the room to find her; and swearing alternately at her for keeping hidden and at the woman because the room was in total darkness.

Meanwhile the struggle in the passage continued, while the door at the back of the house was resounding under the blows that were rained upon it; while the men outside demanded admittance in loud tones.

Marion could not understand why there was so much delay in the rescuers coming to the room where she was, and the suspense was almost unendurable. Delay meant death to her.

Suddenly a cry came from the passage.

"Dick, Dick, Help, Help, Come here, quick."

It was Linnegan's voice, and it seemed as if he had mastered those who had attacked him.

The man in the room ordered the woman to open the door and stand by it, and not let Marion pass, and then dashed out into the passage.

"Get the revolvers, Dick," Marion heard Linnegan shout, as soon as the other man reached the hall, "I've got these two devils down, and can hold 'em for a minute. If you get the barkers, we'll finish off these two, and then we'll make it hot for anyone who tries to get in at us."

The man dashed upstairs, and Marion heard him tramping about overhead.

"Look sharp Dick," called Linnegan, "I can't hold out much longer, and if the door is once opened, there's a dozen coppers outside. What the devil are yer doing?

"I can't put my hand on 'em? Lizzie, Lizzie," he called excitedly, "come out and get a light, will yer? and help to find my barker."

"What about the gal?"

"———— the gal," was the answer shouted down. "Lock 'er in the room, we'll settle with 'er arter this, look sharp."

Marion's heart beat with exultation at the thought that she was to be left alone, when she would be able to open the window and let the men in.

As she heard the woman open the door, she rose a little from her corner prepared to act the moment the room was clear. She strained her eyes to see the woman, but she could not discern anything in the gloom of the room. The rustle of the woman's dress told her that she had opened the door and was leaving the room.

Just at that moment, a shout from the man upstairs

announced that he had found what he wanted, and he came down the staircase at headlong speed, and ran to help Linnegan.

The woman turned back instantly into the room, and Marion crouched down into her corner again. She held her breath and stopped her ears, expecting every moment to hear the crack of a revolver to tell that the murder had been done.

Instead of that, there was a wild cry of rage and confusion raised simultaneously by both men.

The revolvers were unloaded.

A man's voice was then heard at the back of the house, in a tone of authority, ordering the men to break down the back door with all possible speed, as that in the front had been unexpectedly shut just after two police constables had entered.

"Be as quick as you can, men, or there may be murder done," said the officer, who seemed to be standing close to the window.

This explained to the listening girl how it was there had been so long a delay in coming to her rescue. The two men who had entered had been overpowered by Linnegan.

As soon as the discovery was made that the revolvers were not loaded, the struggle in the passage seemed to break out again.

"Lend a 'and here, Dick," she heard, in Linnegan's gruff tones, "and I'll get at this chap's staff; he's got it 'idden away 'ere." Then followed more sounds of fighting, with curses and cries from all the parties; and lastly Marion heard some heavy, smashing blows followed by

moans, and then everything in the front of the house was comparatively still.

"That's been a tough job," said Linnegan, with an oath, "but they won't bother us again yet awhile. Look sharp and get them cartridges, they're in the drawers in the back room, and then we'll give these others pepper, if they try to stop us. And for ——— sake, somebody do get a light. Ah, smash away as hard as yer like; yer won't break that door down in a 'urry," he said, listening to the blows on the back door. "Get them cartridges, quick, Dick; and then you an' me must take to the roofs. This'll be a 'anging job if they get 'old of us."

"The men ain't dead, are they, Bill?" asked the woman, in a frightened tone.

"No, yer fool," replied Linnegan, "but old Simeon is; and I reckon that that cur Bloxam 'as peached."

"Hush, Bill, you forget the girl's here," said the woman.

"So I did," answered the man, with a terrible oath. "But she shan't tell no tales. Dick, find them cartridges, quick, d'yer 'ear; and Lizzie, you get a light. I'll take care she don't get out o' the room. Look alive. Go it, yer devils, 'ammer away; but yer didn't reckon for them two great iron bars, did yer," he muttered, as the blows of the men on the back door sounded even louder than before.

Marion almost fainted with fear as the man, whom they called Dick, felt his way round the room to the chest of drawers by the side of which the girl crouched doubled up in the corner.

She felt the drawers shake as the man pulled them

open to feel for the cartridges, and he almost touched her as he stood turning over the contents of the drawer and tossing them out in his search, on to the top and even over the girl as she stooped at the side.

"Why the dickens don't Lizzie bring that light?" growled the other man, Linnegan. "Time's gettin' precious: does she s'pose those bars 'll 'old out for ever. Got them cartridges, Dick?" he growled.

"Yes," answered the latter, "'ere y' are."

"Give us the revolver as well," said Linnegan.

"I give it yer, jest now in the passage, didn't I, when I come down with it? I've left mine somewhere out there."

He shut up the drawer as he spoke, and the whole chest rocked and shook with his violence. Then he crossed to the door to where his companion was.

"Wot a time Lizzie is gettin' that light: hang the woman, why don't she make 'aste?" And then it seemed to Marion that they both went out of the door to look for the revolvers.

"'Ere she comes at last. Look alive, Lizzie; seconds is precious now," said the other man, and through the open door Marion could see the faint glimmer of a light as the woman was bringing it downstairs.

In another minute Marion knew she must be discovered, and she felt persuaded that they meant to shoot her.

It was a moment of truly awful distress.

Then she made a bold and daring resolve.

She rose quickly from the corner where she had been crouching, and screamed as loud as she could.

"Murder, murder, help, help!"

At the same moment she wrapped a part of the curtain round her hand and arm, and dashed it with all her force through a pane of glass, calling out again,

"I am here. Help, help!"

Then she pulled the curtain with all her force and strength till it fell down from its fastenings, and she crouched back in her corner, letting it fall on her and conceal her.

The two men came running back into the room, swearing vengeance upon her, and the woman entered with the light at the same moment.

"Put a bullet through 'er 'ead," shouted Linnegan, uttering a terrible curse.

The woman held the light aloft while the men looked hastily about for the girl, but for the moment could not see her.

That moment saved her life, for the next instant the window was beaten in, and several policemen sprang into the room and rushed to secure the two men and the woman.

The two men fired their revolvers, without doing any harm, however, and turned and fled from the room, closing the door behind them; thus causing a momentary check to their pursuers.

Then Marion, who had passed so bravely through the ordeal, and had even at the last moment saved her own life by the shrewd resource and prompt courage with which she had brought the police into the room and had hidden herself, felt her strength giving way. The feeling that she was safe, and that there was no longer need for

action on her own part, relaxed suddenly the strain and nervous tension, and she fainted without being able to call out, or even to stir from the corner where she crouched.

Meanwhile, the door of the room was quickly forced and the police pursued the men upstairs, and as the two ruffians had no time to carry out their plan of escaping by the roof, a most desperate struggle took place, in which both sides knew they were fighting for their lives.

The struggle was fierce and terrible while it lasted. Two of the constables were shot, though not seriously, by the first discharge from the men's revolvers, but before they could fire a second volley the police rushed in upon them, and after a short time, in which the use of the truncheon was not spared, both men were secured and handcuffed. Both sides had wounds to show as the result of the conflict.

As soon as the fight was over and the prisoners secured, one or two of the constables ran downstairs to open the front door and let in those of their comrades who were stationed there.

"Is Miss Jannaway safe?" was asked, as soon as the door was open.

In the excitement of the struggle with the men, the police had forgotten Marion, and when the question was asked, several of them hurried away to search the house.

In the front room they found the two constables who had been beaten into insensibility, and arrangements were at once made for their removal to the hospital.

"She was in the back room," said one of the men, who had heard her cry for help, when she broke the window.

They called to her by name, and began to fear the worst when no answer was given.

A light was brought, and, when, after looking about the room for some time, they found her doubled up in the corner, squeezed in between the drawers and wall, pale as death and motionless, they thought she was dead.

CHAPTER XXVII

AFTER THE RESCUE

MARION was very weak and exhausted after the shock and strain of her terrible experiences in Clergy-street; and for some time after her removal to Mr. Fawcett's house was too prostrated to give any long account of what had happened.

She rallied, however, very quickly, when the turn came, and she thanked Mr. Fawcett very cordially for his promptness in taking means to have her rescued.

"They intended to break into the house here," she said, when she had told them something of the occurrences; "in order to find the receipt for the jewels, so that I might send it up to you to-morrow morning. They asked me for an exact description of the position of my room, and the place in which I had left the receipt."

"Did you give it to them?" asked the bank manager, rather eagerly and anxiously.

"No," replied Marion, smiling. "I hope it was not very wicked of me; but I invented a description on the spur of the moment. But if the man who I suppose was to undertake the burglary—he is a young man, slim, dark and shrewd-looking—does not hear of the arrests, an attempt may be made. It would be well to take precautions."

"I will do so," answered Mr. Fawcett. "Let me say, however, how clever it was of you to think of communicating with me in the cipher."

"Rather, how quick of you to understand such an extraordinary message as I had to send," answered Marion, and she held out her hand and pressed his as she added, "It was that saved my life."

"Most fortunately I was not very busy this afternoon, and the circumstances of your sending as you did struck me as very singular. Then I came across the figures, and began to wonder what they could mean. Happily, the slip of cipher and the key to it which you gave me were at hand, and I was thus able to read the message. The rest you owe to Mr. Mostyn, the detective. As soon as I understood the message I went up to the police station, and he happened to be there. I told him everything, and he made all the plans immediately. When that woman Bloxam came to the bank the last time we detained her—Mostyn of course knew her—and questioned her. She would not say where you were, and denied all knowledge of the Clergy-street house. Then we bounced her a little, and said we should take her into custody on the charge of being concerned in your father's murder: and there was no doubt about her being frightened. I had her followed to Clergy-street, and when she was seen to enter the same house you had mentioned in your letter, we knew we were on the right track. Mostyn, however, said we had better wait till dark, as the neighborhood was a nasty one, and if anyone saw we were making preparations to rescue you they might give an alarm. We did wait and you know the result."

"I don't understand it all yet," answered Marion. "I cannot understand, for one thing, how James Linnegan escaped from prison without our knowing of it, and it is absolutely unaccountable how Mrs. Bloxam should have given such information to me and to the police, about Linnegan, as she did, and yet be apparently on such good terms with him. I cannot understand it."

"I cannot explain it; but I must just go and take precautions lest any attempt should really be made to break in here to-night."

He left the room, and when he returned said that the detective, Mr. Mostyn, had called, and wished to know whether Marion was well enough to see him.

"Certainly," said the girl, who was eager to learn the explanation of the mystery.

Mr. Mostyn's manner towards Marion was very different from what it had formerly been. It was now without a trace of suspicion, and at times was nearly deferential.

"I thought you would perhaps wish to see me to-night, Miss Jannaway, in reference to these arrests," he said. "I hope you are better now, and feel no ill effects from this afternoon. You have had a wonderful escape. We know the men well," he added, turning to Mr. Fawcett. "One of them is a most notorious and desperate scoundrel, Bill Burkett, and has been wanted by us for a long time."

"Please tell me," said Marion, eagerly, "how came it that James Linnegan escaped."

"James Linnegan? I do not quite understand you," said Mr. Mostyn. "Linnegan has not escaped."

"Oh, you do not understand," cried the girl, "James Linnegan is one of the men who was in Clergy-street. How could he get there if he had not escaped?"

The detective looked at Marion with some surprise and smiled as he replied:

"But James Linnegan is in the House of Detention and has been there since he was remanded from the police court." Then his manner changed suddenly, and his face lighted up rapidly as a thought occurred to him. "Stay a moment. Let me ask you a question. You think you saw Linnegan in Clergy-street this afternoon."

"Think!" cried Marion. "I am positive. The man I gave into custody was the man I saw this afternoon. I could pick him out from a hundred. I can now see before my eyes the heavy, massive figure, the dull, sullen-looking face, the thick, protruding jaws, and I can never forget the deep, husky, rolling bass voice. The man who broke into Morris-place, who entered my father's house in Clergy-street when I lay in hiding there, who robbed me in the cab, and whom I gave into custody, is the man who nearly killed those constables in Clergy-street this afternoon, and then wanted to murder me. I am positive."

"Yet you are mistaken, Miss Jannaway; completely and utterly mistaken," said the detective, quietly. "But what you have said shows me where we are. The two men Linnegan and Burkett are very much alike, and each has the same husky, deep voice. You have confused them; and the man who has attempted to rob you and has broken into the houses is Tom Burkett. He and

this woman Bloxam have been pulling together in this matter. That's what it means."

"But you forget," said Marion, "that this Linnegan was found to have in his possession certain property which belonged to my father."

"He may be in it as well," answered Mr. Mostyn, "as likely as not; but you may depend upon it we have the chief actor in Burkett."

"But if they were acting in league together, why did Mrs. Bloxam volunteer the evidence against Linnegan?" asked Marion.

"Ah, there is that," put in Mr. Fawcett, who had been listening most intently to the conversation.

"No doubt that will come out directly," answered the detective, escaping from the dilemma with a customary police phrase. "But now about the charges against these people, Burkett and the Dunns, to-morrow. They will be charged, together with the woman Bloxam, with conspiring to rob you and with the assaults upon the police; while Burkett and Dunn will have a number of charges of burglary to answer. It is probable, however, that the smaller matters will be brought up first. You know we obtained a search warrant under which we entered the house; and the assault on the police will be enough to procure their detention. Shall you be well enough to appear against them?"

"Yes; well, no; on consideration, I am not certain. This conversation has very much excited me, and I do not think I am quite so well as I was; but if it is absolutely necessary I will try to appear." It had suddenly

occurred to her that Ralph Gething might be very unwilling for her to take any more steps until his return.

"I do not think Miss Jannaway ought to appear to-morrow," said Mr. Fawcett. "She is not strong enough."

"Well, we will see. I do not think it will be essential, though it might be advantageous," said Mr. Mostyn, as he rose to leave.

Very soon after he had left, a telegram came for Marion from Ralph Gething, saying he was on his way home, and would arrive early in the morning.

This gave the girl great delight. She was passionately eager to see her lover again, and have the whole of this cloud of doubt and misgiving removed, and the expectation of having him again with her, almost drove away the excitement which had been caused by Mr. Mostyn telling her of the mistake she had made in regard to the two men.

The Fawcetts and Marion sat some time talking over the whole matter and indulging in many guesses, more or less vague, as to what could possibly be the explanation, and they were just going to bed, when a loud knocking and ringing at the door disturbed them. The servants had gone to bed, and, remembering what Marion had said, about the threatened burglary, Mrs. Fawcett was very unwilling that the door should be opened.

"Burglars don't ring and knock like that, my dear," said the bank manager, with a smile.

"Oh, you don't know what they'll do, Robert," answered his wife. "I'm sure Miss Jannaway will agree with me that we'd better not open the door. Had we, dear?" she said, appealing to Marion.

"I do not think I am afraid," answered Marion.

At that moment the knocking was repeated, and Mr. Fawcett went down to the door. In deference to his wife's fears—and not altogether without thought for himself—he asked in a loud voice who it was, before unlocking the door.

"It's me, Mr. Fawcett, Sergeant Mostyn. I want to see Miss Jannaway."

The bank manager recognized the voice and the detective stepped in immediately.

"I have most important news, Mr. Fawcett; and I intended to knock you up. We've had a confession of the murder of old Simeon Hoadley in Clergy-street."

They went upstairs at once to Marion.

"Mr. Mostyn has some very important news, Miss Jannaway," said Mr. Fawcett as the two men entered the room.

"I thought you would wish to know what has happened without any delay," said Mr. Mostyn, with a quasi apology, "so I returned here even at this late hour."

"What is it?" asked Marion. She had been thinking so much of Ralph Gething, that she feared for the moment that something might have transpired affecting him.

"The woman Bloxam has made a most important statement," said Mr. Mostyn, "amounting to a virtual confession of the murder of your father."

"Mrs. Bloxam?" cried Marion, starting up in her surprise. "What does she say?"

"Her statement is to this effect," replied the detective. "She avers that James Linnegan had nothing to do with the crime, but that it was committed by the two men Dunn

and Burkett, and that she was present. She says that she had for a long time believed that Simeon Hoadley was in possession of a large amount of money and valuables; but though she searched his rooms constantly in his absence, she could find nothing. She took the Dunns and Burkett into her confidence, and they came to the conclusion that he was carrying it about with him, or that it was in the safe of which he kept the keys. They resolved to drug him and rob him. The time was arranged and she herself administered the drug. The others did not come to her as they had agreed, and she went across to fetch them. As she was returning after some small delay, she was concerned to see someone leave the house, No. 50. When they all entered the room where your father was, there were signs that the place had been disturbed. She said nothing, however, and they all went to work to search the old man. The delay had, however, allowed the effects of the drug to partially wear off, and in the midst of the search, they were startled by his recovering consciousness and beginning to struggle and cry out. Then it was that both Dunn and Burkett turned on him, and dealt him the blows which killed him. They were the more furious because, after all, they could not find a single valuable in the place. She declares that she endeavored to save the old man's life, and only desisted when they turned on her and threatened her."

"That is a very extraordinary statement," said Mr. Fawcett. Marion was silent and thoughtful; and the detective resumed.

"They were still so certain that there were valuables in the place that as soon as we had given up the place to you

they broke into it again, and when the goods were removed they followed them as you know. They believed that you yourself knew of the existence of this money. Then, it seems, Mrs. Bloxam found you there one afternoon, and afterwards picked up a valuable stone you had dropped in the room. This determined them to try and rob you, and when that failed, to decoy you and force you to give up everything."

"Whatever was there belonged to Miss Jannaway under her father's will," said Mr. Fawcett. "The will was left in my charge; and what was found is now in the bank cellars."

"Quite so. I quite understand that," said the detective.

"But I understood the police ascertained that Mrs. Bloxam had been absent for a week before my poor father's death," said Marion to Mr. Mostyn.

"We were told so: but as a matter of fact, our informant was the woman Dunn."

"Ah, I see: a little police mistake,' said Mr. Fawcett, drily.

Mr. Mostyn gave a little deprecating cough, and did not answer.

"What has caused Mrs. Bloxam to make this statement, do you suppose?" asked Marion.

"When she learnt that the others had been arrested she was very much affected; and probably she thought—as these people so often do—that it would be a race as to who should make the first confession, so as to be allowed to turn Queen's evidence, or at least to get a lighter sentence."

"Do you suppose she has told the truth?"

Mr. Mostyn shrugged his shoulders.

"I should be sorry to have to decide that," he answered, lightly. "This will of course be likely to affect the course of proceedings to-morrow; but I will see you in the morning," and he rose to leave.

"Still this does not account for James Linnegan's possession of the seal that belonged to my poor father," said Marion.

"Not exactly: but there is some reason to think from this statement of Bloxam's that he was the man who went to the house while your father lay drugged; and that either he, or those with whom he may have been working, had a knowledge of some hiding place of your father's, and robbed him. That, however, we shall soon find out now; just as we shall know who was working with him."

Marion turned suddenly pale at these words, and she bade the detective good night.

She remembered how pale Ralph Gething had been on the night of the discovery of the murder; how he had seemed to know the house, and had told them which had been her father's room; and how the detective had spoken to her on the subject.

She thought of all this in connection with Mr. Mostyn's words, and a new fear took possession of her, with a desire stronger than ever to learn how it could be that Linnegan, who as was now pretty clear, must at any rate have robbed her father, had been so closely associated with Ralph; and how Ralph could have in his possession the little ornament which she knew must have been a part of the proceeds of the robbery.

The fear haunted and perplexed her, and kept her restless and troubled during the whole of the night.

It seemed almost as if the clearing up of the one mystery had only left the other more inexplicable.

CHAPTER XXVIII

RALPH GETHING'S STORY

By the morning Marion's desire to see Ralph Gething had deepened into an intense anxiety, and she blamed herself because after a restless night she had fallen asleep in the early morning, and was much later than usual in rising.

She dressed quickly and hurried downstairs, wondering at what time Ralph would arrive; and as she opened the door of the breakfast-room, she gave a little cry of joy when she saw her lover sitting and bending over the fire.

He jumped up and came to her with outstretched hands, and as she went to him she could see how worried and wearied he looked.

"Oh, Ralph," she said, eagerly. "I have so longed for you to come back," and her manner told of her pleasure far more eloquently than any words could have done.

He kissed her once or twice, and drew her to the window, looking rather anxiously into her face.

"You are very pale," he said, "and have such a troubled look that it touches my heart."

"Does it, Ralph? I have gone through a great deal, and even now I am longing to learn that which will ease this dreadful fever and fear in my heart," and she looked wistfully and yet searchingly into his eyes.

"Marion," said Ralph Gething, taking the girl's face

between his two hands and looking long and lovingly into it. "Do you trust me?"

She thought she could detect an echo of pain and hesitation in his voice, and his face seemed to cloud over while he waited for her answer, for she paused a moment before answering.

"Yes, Ralph, I trust you. I have forced myself to distrust everything that seemed to tell against you. But oh, my dear, it has been hard sometimes. Not hard to trust you; but hard to put away everything that seemed to tempt me to give shelter to these miserable suspicions. But I would not do it. However hard the struggle, I have always ended by being firm in my faith in you. But do not let us have these clouds again between us."

"I am glad you trusted me, Marion; very glad. I should not have blamed you—I could not have done so—if you had not been quite able to keep your faith without even a crease. And you love me as ever?" he asked tenderly.

The look that the girl gave him made any other answer superfluous; and there was a long silence between them, which was broken by the entrance of Mrs. Fawcett, who made many anxious enquiries about Marion's health.

After breakfast, Marion and Ralph were left alone, and it was then that Ralph told her all that he knew.

"I have been greatly to blame Marion," he said gently. "It all began, as such things will, in a wish to hide one fact from you; this led to other complications, until I was almost afraid to do anything but await the issue of events, and hope for the best. Even now, I scarcely know how to begin," he said with a smile.

"There is one thing that I chiefly want to know," said Marion. "What is your connection with James Linnegan? How and when did you first come to know him?—and why did he give you a curious ornament that I know belonged to my father? How did he get possession of it? He did give it to you, didn't he?"

"That is more than one thing," answered Ralph Gething, with a smile which seemed to Marion out of place; "You think I ought not to smile," he said, noticing the little frown which showed the girl's momentary dissatisfaction. "Perhaps you are right; but everything can be explained now, and after the anxiety I have suffered for some time, I seem to wish to smile. James Linnegan came to my father's house almost immediately after he was released from prison, and my father then, for the first time, told me what had been the secret of his life—and a sad, wearing secret, too. Years ago, he had some money transactions with Simeon Hoadley, your father, and under pressure of some temptation, he forged a check which your father got into his possession. That check he employed as a lever to force my father to pay him money, as much, or rather more, than he could at all afford. At that time Linnegan was your father's clerk, and knew of certain circumstances connected with the transaction which were sufficient to have released my father from the yoke, had he known of them. It was to tell him of them that Linnegan saw my father in coming out of jail. These were the circumstances which I was anxious to keep from you. You will understand why?"

"Yes," answered the girl, in a low voice, sorrowing for the part which her father had taken.

"When I saw Linnegan it was arranged that he and I together should see this Simeon Hoadley; and I was going to do this. I met him one day in the street when I was with Linnegan, and then I learnt for the first time that Simeon Hoadley and Simeon Jannaway—my Marion's father—were one and the same. As a matter of fact, I never saw your father on the subject of the check; I had an appointment to go to him with Linnegan on the very night of the murder, but as I was kept late at the office, and had to meet you, I persuaded Linnegan to go to Clergy-street by himself."

"Did he go?" asked Marion, looking up eagerly.

"Yes; and what happened then has been the cause of all our anxiety since. He found your father, as he thought, asleep, and he determined to take by stealth what he could not make the old man pay him openly. Do you know who James Linnegan is?" asked Ralph, breaking off.

"No," replied Marion.

"Ah, then I will tell you. You have heard probably that your father had a daughter long ago—a daughter who was married, and dead and buried before you were born. James Linnegan was her husband."

"What?" cried out Marion in great surprise.

"It is true. Linnegan ran away with his wife—induced her to leave home secretly—and your father never forgave him. He swore to ruin him, and kept his word to the bitter end. Linnegan's wife died after they had been married a year, and your father, who had been passionately attached to her, laid the death at Linnegan's door. Not even your father's second marriage with her who was your mother, Marion, could appease the old man's anger. Lin-

negan went to America and made a mess of things, and after a number of years he came back to try and get from your father a certain sum of money that belonged to him. He was unsuccessful, and it was arranged that Linnegan should act as a kind of clerk to your father, and he declares that this was only part and parcel of a scheme that was soon to bring him to ruin."

"He seems a bitter man, Ralph?"

"He has had a bitter life, Marion. After he had been with your father some little, the latter and the woman, Bloxam, concocted the story of the attempted murder."

"Was that not true?" asked Marion.

"No, my dear. The bullets said to have been fired at your father by Linnegan, were fired into the wall by your father himself, and he also inflicted a slight flesh wound upon himself to make the story seem true. You know the result. He was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, but he was pardoned after five years."

"But my father spoke of him as such a deadly enemy to us both, and was in such fear of his violence," said Marion.

"He feared him because he had so wronged him," answered Ralph Gething, "and because at the time of conviction Linnegan's rage overcame him, and he swore to take your father's life. But he is a man of a kind heart and a gentle disposition, though soured by the life he has led."

"What a terrible story; and how sad," said Marion, with a sigh.

"I am sorry to have had to tell it you Marion. But now you will understand about the money. Your father

had never paid it, and when Linnegan found him asleep, and knew where a sum of money would be hidden, he determined to help himself, and he took what he could find. But he left the house while your father was still sleeping—sleeping as we now know under the influence of the woman Bloxam's drug. I knew of the visit and knew afterwards what he had taken; and then the fact of the murder came upon us like a thunder clap. In a moment we perceived the terrible misconstruction to which Linnegan's visit to the house almost at the time of the murder was liable."

"Why did you not tell me?" asked Marion and there was an accent of reproach in her voice that appealed forcibly to him.

"I am sorry now, indeed," he answered, "but at the time I was ashamed. I wanted to keep from you all knowledge of what my father had done, as well as to conceal the part which yours had played. With all this in my mind I knew that my manner must seem strange to you. I persevered, however, and even went so far as to break into the house at Clergy-street when you were away from London in order to try and find the papers which Linnegan said were there. But I found nothing and the only result of that visit was that I was nearly arrested. How I escaped I know not; but I managed to get away, and then I determined to leave London for a while. The rest you know."

"I know more than that; I know how you managed to escape." And she told him of her having seen him in the house, and how she had mistaken the man who interrupted

him for Linnegan, just as Ralph had mistaken him for a detective.

"But I know now, of course, that it was the man Burkett. What must you have thought, when you recognized me in the house?" cried Ralph Gething. "Oh, if I had only known you were there, I would have told you all, then."

"How did you get that fish ornament, Ralph?"

"Linnegan restored it to me. It belonged to my father originally, but like so much else found its way into Simeon Hoadley's hands. Linnegan found it among the money he took from Clergy-street, and gave it up to me."

"Why did James Linnegan wish to take the house in Clergy-street?" asked Marion.

"Because he, like other people, believed there was a hoard of money in the house; and he thought he had a better right to it than anyone. He knew nothing of the relations between you and me; I had not told him even who you were, and he only knew you as Miss Jannaway. If I had only——"

Before he finished the sentence, Mr. Price, the lawyer, was announced, and hurried into the room, expressing his congratulations at the escape which Marion had had on the previous day.

"I have heard something of the circumstances, Miss Jannaway," he said, "and you have reason to be profoundly thankful for your escape. Do you know, Mr. Gething," said the lawyer, turning to Ralph, "that of all the brave, fearless, reckless, rash, and imprudent young ladies I have ever heard of, Miss Jannaway is the super-

lative degree. She forces one to admire her courage and wonder at her resolution in the same breath, that one feels almost mad at her hare-brained escapades. But I have not time to scold now; we must settle the matter of to-day's proceedings."

A long consultation followed in which the whole of the facts, including Ralph Gething's story were put before the lawyer. After many questions had been asked and answered, and a long time had been spent in deliberating upon the best course to pursue, it was decided to apply for James Linnegan's immediate release in order that his evidence might strengthen in some degree the statement which Mrs. Bloxam had made. And as soon as the consultation was finished, both Mr. Price and Ralph Gething went away in order to prepare for all that had to be done that day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE END

THE days that followed were days of comparative peace for Marion.

Mrs. Bloxam was allowed to turn "Queen's evidence," as it was felt that in no other way could the conviction of the two men, Burkett and Dunn, be obtained. Moreover, some few circumstances, in addition to James Linnegan's testimony, were found to corroborate her story that though she had been a party to the robbery, she had tried to prevent the murder of Simeon Hoadley. The two men were sentenced to death and the woman, Dunn's wife, was convicted of being an accessory, and sent to penal servitude for a long term.

Marion was no believer in Mrs. Bloxam's oft repeated assertions of repentance. The most she would consent to was to furnish her with sufficient funds to leave the country, and the woman, fearing the vengeance of the associates of the men she had betrayed, was glad enough to go away.

The houses in Morris-place and Clergy-street were sold, and as the news of the discovery of Miser Hoadley's fortune had leaked out, with the usual accompaniment of erroneous exaggeration, both places fetched prices that were out of all proportion to their real value, the buyers

evidently believing that there might be more jewels to be found. Whether any hoard was ever found, has never been made known. If the purchasers were sharp enough to find anything, they had wit enough to keep the fact secret.

Certainly Marion never troubled herself to inquire. Her own fortune—of the existence of which Ralph Gething heard with absolutely unbounded surprise—turned out even greater than had been anticipated, thanks to the zeal and shrewdness shown by a friend who most unexpectedly came to her help in the matter—old Ezra Gibeon. He had taken a strange liking to Marion at the time of their former interview, and when the discovery of Simeon Hoadley's jewels began to be hinted at, he offered to help in realizing them. He did the work honestly, and in the result gained for her from £3,000 to £4,000 more than was expected; and he followed up his good bargaining by going so far as to refuse to accept even a commission for his trouble. That this cost him some qualms and pangs is more than likely, but his refusal is all the greater tribute to the influence which Marion exerted over him.

So far as James Linnegan was concerned, Marion made every effort in her power to atone alike for the suspicion she herself had harbored against him, and for the wrongs he had suffered at her father's hands. She insisted on paying him in full the amount that had been so long withheld by her father, and wished to add to it a very substantial portion of her wealth. But Linnegan would not accept anything more than the amount to which he felt justly entitled, and declared that Marion and Ralph would be able to make a better use of the money than he would.

His life had been soured and saddened by trouble, ill-usage, and injustice; and his great desire was to forget all the past as quickly as possible. For this purpose he meant to return to America, where there was nothing against him, as he said, and where he thought he could turn the money to the best advantage. Both Marion and Ralph tried at first to persuade him to stay in England; the girl pressing it if only to give her an opportunity of making up to him, in a measure, what he had suffered. But when she saw that he was wishful to go, and that it was a trouble to him to have to refuse, she desisted and then sought how best to help him in carrying out his project.

Through Mr. Price she was able to make some arrangements to secure an opening for him, which promised well; and as his future was in this way assured, Marion was more contented to let him go.

But she was somehow low-spirited when she and Ralph stepped back on to the tender and watched the great liner in which he went away, and they strained their eyes to catch the last glimpse of him, as he stood waving his handkerchief. He was at that time the only relation she had in the world, and it saddened her a little that they should be parted.

She whispered this to her lover as they stood at the side of the tender looking after the fast vanishing ship, and Ralph comforted her with such words as only lovers' lips can readily frame.

The feeling of sadness wore off quickly, however, in the days of calm, peaceful happiness that followed. Amid the trouble and anxiety and excitement of the events which had so suddenly changed the whole course and cir-

cumstances of her life, Marion had had little time to spend in lamentation for the death of her father, and when the time of stress had passed the peace and quiet were so welcome, and the prospect of her marriage so close that she was very happy. She mourned for her father at times, but when Ralph found her sorrowing, and inclined to brood over the past, he always strove to lead her to brighter thoughts.

And she loved him so, that he could always succeed. She felt a kind of secret reproach for ever having entertained the doubt of him that at one time had so greatly disturbed and distressed her; and in consequence she was always eager to make him amends. The thoughts she had for his happiness, the plans she never tired of making for his help, the surprises she was always seeking to prepare for his comfort and the numberless ways in which she sought to let him feel the strength and extent of her love and care for him, gave her infinite pleasure and occupation; and every day and every hour served to bring the two more closely together.

The sense of wealth, however, seemed in some degree to oppress her, and she had often to ask herself, and her lover also, how it could be employed so as to do the most good. This castle-building was also a favorite pleasure with her.

"No one knows how my poor father may have made the money, but at least we will be sure that it is spent worthily," she said, when she and Ralph were alone together one evening. "It is a great responsibility is money, Ralph."

"Yes, dear; but not an unbearable one," he answered,

with a smile. "It's a heavy load that has a wonderful knack of fitting itself into the angles of one's back, and finding out methods of lightening its own weight. Of all the burdens I have ever known, this has, I believe, the greatest power of adaptability to the bearer's strength."

Marion laughed in a way that was pleasant to hear.

"Shall we get used to it, then, Mr. Cynic?" she asked.

"Yes, I think so—between us. I have enough practical worldliness about me to keep in check your more ingenuous impulses; and you have the enthusiasm that will serve to stir my more sluggish nature. Yes, I think we can manage it between us."

He looked down at her, and laughed again.

"But we must try to use it for the benefit of others as well as of ourselves, Ralph. I could not be happy otherwise."

"Certainly, Marion, certainly. Heaven forbid that I should want you to do anything else. The fortune is yours, child; my fortune is yourself."

"And I shall expect you to take great care of your fortune, too, sir," she answered, smiling in a way that lighted up her face wonderfully.

"And with God's help, my darling, I will always," and he drew her to him, and kissed her long and passionately.

It was the eve of their wedding-day.

THE END

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